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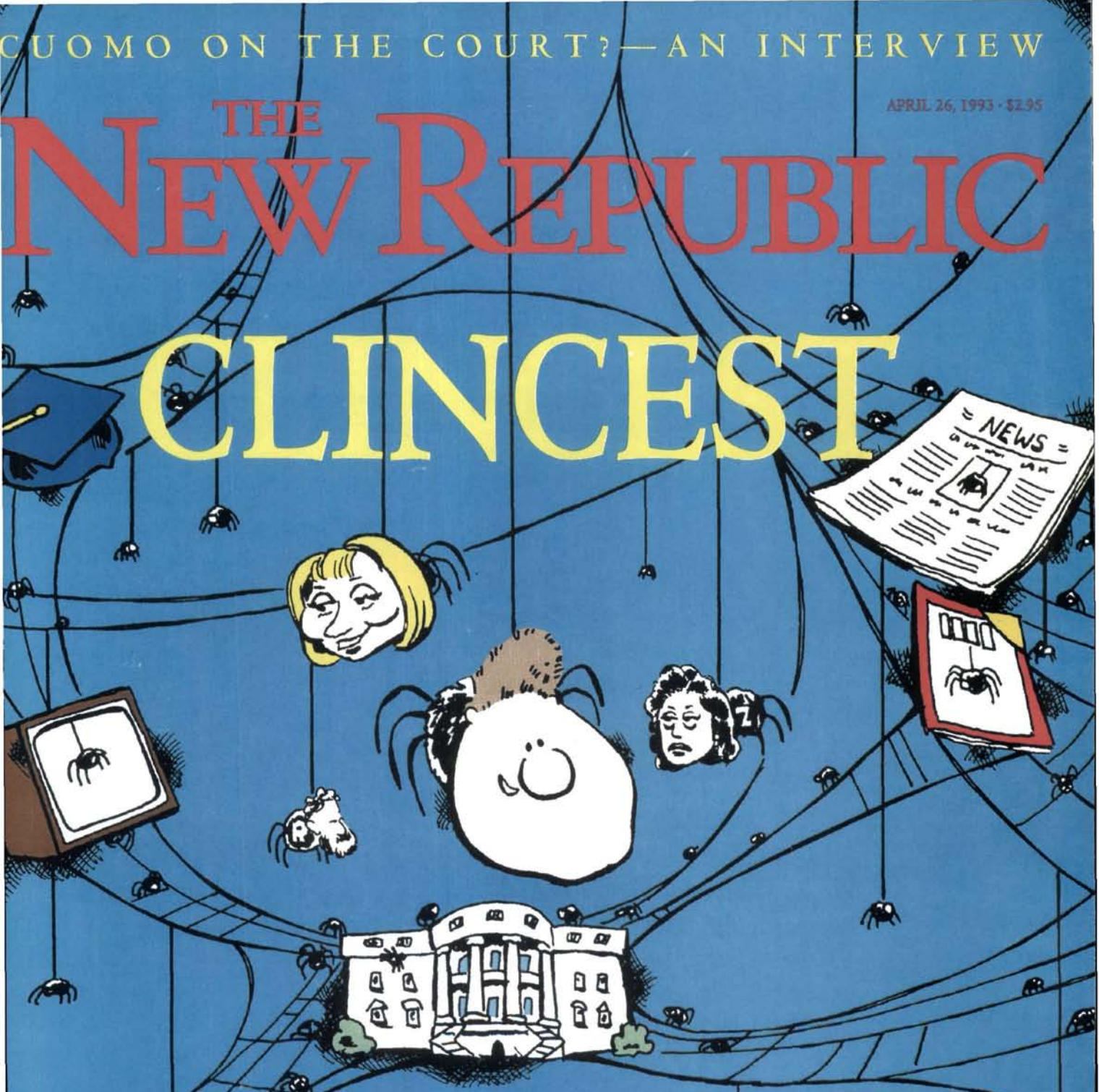

The Rhodes scholar mafia is just the beginning. In Clinton's Washington, the worlds of the media, government, law and academia are now structurally enmeshed. Most everyone seems to have gone to school with each other, is married to each other, writes about each other or lobbies each other. And boasts about it.

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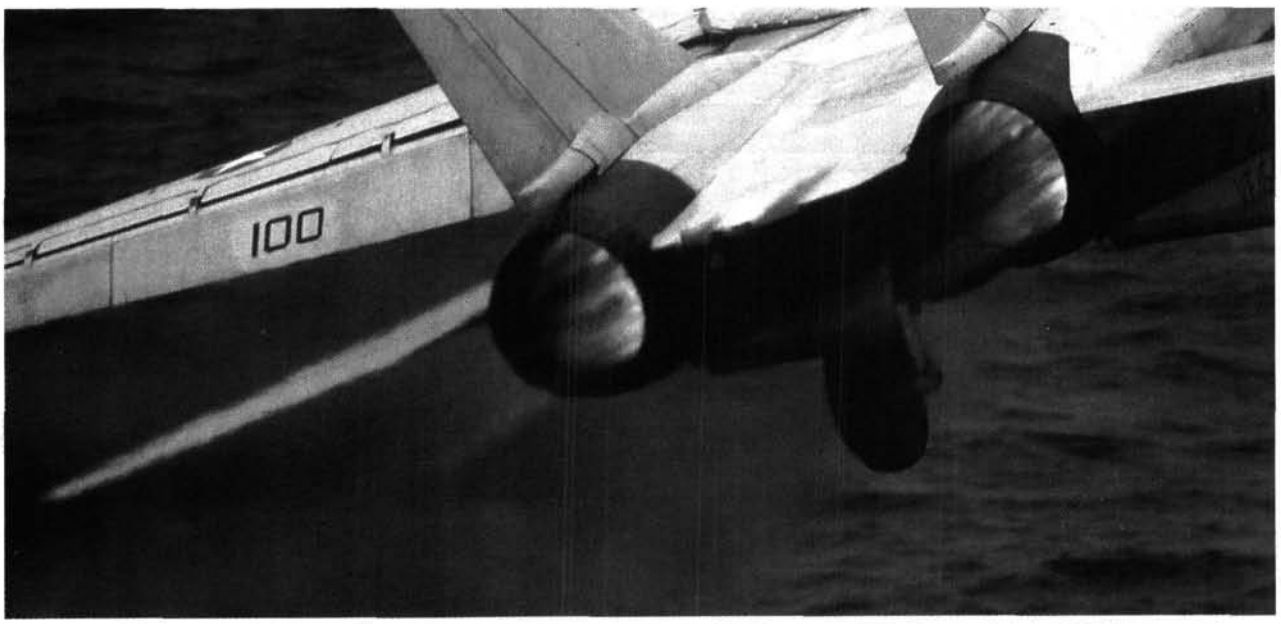

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

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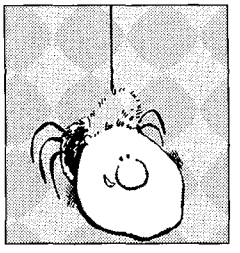

Cover by Tom Toles for THE NEW REPUBLIC. Article on page 22.

4 **CORRESPONDENCE** Little girls and little boys, Shakespeare as plagiarist &c.

6 **MICKEY KAUS** TRB: HAUTE CLOTURE Who do these Republican senators think they are?

7 **THE EDITORS** HOW BILL CAN BLOW IT Clinton's good start could be wrecked by two things: a trade war and an overly generous health care reform.

8 **NOTEBOOK** The conquest of Bosnia, censoring the funny papers &c.

9 **DOUGLAS G. McGRATH** THE FLAPJACK FILE: FEELING THE PAIN Agent Duke returns.

10 **RUTH SHALIT** WASHINGTON SCENE: THE LOBBYIST IS IN The health care town meeting.

11 **FRED BARNES** WHITE HOUSE WATCH: BILL AND BORIS A Clinton coup in Vancouver.

14 **JEFFREY ROSEN** CUOMO VADIS What kind of Supreme Court justice would Mario Cuomo be? A guide to his written record—and an interview.

18 **GERALD J. GARVEY AND JOHN J. DiIULIO JR.** ONLY CONNECT? It's a given in the debate on gays in the military that unit cohesion and combat effectiveness are deeply linked. But what if there's no real evidence that they are?

22 **JACOB WEISBERG** CLINCEST Bill Clinton's ruling elite—in the media, government, law and academia—is more closely linked than any in recent history. Everyone seems to know everyone else; and no one seems to care. Is this an end to gridlock, or a self-serving, incestuous clique?

28 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: REVIVING, REVEALING TNR hits the screen in *Born Yesterday*.

29 **ROBERT BRUSTEIN** ON THEATER: AKALAITIS AXED *Wings* at the Public Theater turns out to be a swan song.

32 **JOSEPH LEO KOERNER** THE SHOCK OF THE VIEW *Perspective as Symbolic Form* by Erwin Panofsky, translated by Christopher S. Wood

38 **ALEJANDRO PORTES** THE LONGEST MIGRATION *Latinos* by Earl Shorris; *Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority* by Peter Skerry; *The Other Side* by Ruben Martinez; *Days of Obligation* by Richard Rodriguez

42 **MARC ROBINSON** FIELD WORK *Ulverton* by Adam Thorpe

44 **DAVID CONSTANTINE** POEM *Master and Man*

46 **MICHAEL LEWIS** WASHINGTON DIARIST: TOY GOY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Old money

To the editors:

In "Tax and Mend" (March 22) Robert Shapiro contends that fairness requires that retired couples earning more than $32,000 per year be taxed at the rate of 85 percent of their Social Security benefits rather than the 50 percent under present law. Why? Well, says Shapiro, these retirees are really "upper-income" when it comes to wealth. And wealth is loosely defined by the author as retirees owning "at least $250,000 in income-producing assets, such as stocks or C.D.s, to generate part of this income."

The question must be asked: Is $250,000 a lot of money for a couple in retirement? When one considers that 50 percent of all persons over the age of 65 will require long-term nursing care during their lifetime, this sum of capital vanishes as quickly as the income it produces. In addition, when Shapiro hypothesizes that retired couples can realize an income of $30,000 a year from investments of "at least" $250,000, one wonders how this is possible when "long-term interest rates are at their lowest level in a generation."

Indeed, the proposed tax on Social Security benefits affecting middle-class retired couples can only result in punishing many of our citizens who may need special care as they grow older.

J. L. SIMON
Lawrence, New York

A.D.-positive

To the editors:

Jeffrey Rosen's "Lemon Law" (March 29) is an accurate depiction of the confused condition of current church-state doctrine. I wonder, however, if he has thought through the consequences of his "neutrality" test. Such a test would almost certainly require the removal of references to the deity from the Pledge of Allegiance and from coins, and would threaten Sunday Closing Law, invocations and legislative chaplains. Even the use of the Christian calendar might be challenged: the abbreviation of A.D. is hardly neutral. These developments might produce tidier constitutional law, but they would also stimulate ferocious, possibly overwhelming public resistance. Church-state issues would be moved to the forefront of political debate; Pat Buchanan would have his religious war. Is this really what we want?

I would suggest instead a closer look at Justice O'Connor's "endorsement" test—while eliminating the ridiculous "excessive entanglement" doctrine. The "endorsement" standard may be "mushy," but it would allow the Court to strike down egregious acts of favoritism toward religion (such as classroom prayer) while leaving elbow room for long-established, widely popular and essentially harmless practices. In sum, the establishment clause may respond more readily to a modicum of common sense than to a rigid formula.

CHARLES A. NATANSON
Santa Cruz, California

Tinhorn

To the editors:

Jacob Heilbrunn's review of Deborah Shapley's book *Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara* ("The Hollow Man," March 22) perfectly describes the Robert McNamara I knew. Right on. I wish I had devoted more time to him in *The Straw Giant.*

Two quick vignettes. I once sat and listened entranced at a small dinner at Stewart Alsop's while McNamara, then at the World Bank, told us he had solved the Indian birth control problem. Someone had developed a wire that could be buried in the ground and when a man stepped over it, his testicles were "zapped" so that he could breed no more children. McNamara then concluded that all that had to be done was to devise a system of rewards that would persuade Indian men to step across the wire. "And I am an expert on rewards," he concluded. My jaw had dropped so far I could not speak.

From the mid-'70s on, 'til they died my wife and I would have Sunday lunch once a month with Bob Lovett and his wife. I once asked Bob: "In a long life you must have blown a few. What is the worst mistake you ever made?" He replied without hesitation. "That's easy. Recommending McNamara to Jack Kennedy. We got a tinhorn Napoleon who almost destroyed America."

ARTHUR T. HADLEY
New York, New York

To the editors:

Jacob Heilbrunn's review contains at least one glaring inaccuracy. Heilbrunn writes that McNamara's father "had immigrated to the New World from County Cork during the Great Famine. If true, the elder McNamara would have been minimally 68 years old when his son was born in 1916. Yet, Shapley states on page five of her book, "They [McNamara's grandparents] had emigrated

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from County Cork after the Great Famine to Stoughton, Massachusetts, where their second son, Robert James [McNamara's father], was born in 1863," i.e., he was born in the United States at least fifteen years after the potato blight receded. Further, the first photograph reproduced in the book shows the young McNamara, age 2, and his parents at the beach in 1918. The boy's father is clearly about 50 years of age, not the 70-plus years Heilbrunn would lead us to expect.

GERALD W. SULLIVAN
McLean, Virginia

Lotto

To the editors:

When asked if he'd buy a $1,000 brain scan if the chances that it would reveal a problem were one in a thousand, Mickey Kaus apparently would. "Keep taking one in a thousand risks, I figure, and pretty soon your number might come up" (TRB, "HMOphobia," March 29).

Here's some investment advice for Kaus then: Find a three-number lotto game, and bet $1,000 on it every day. Keep at it for three years, the expected amount of time it will take to score the lotto big bucks, or to find a problem if your brain scan were needed *daily*. Will it take three years to decide it's not worth your kid's lunch money to keep at it? Probably not.

The break-even point for wagering $1,000 on a thousand-to-one longshot is $1,000,000, not $1,000. Is it really worth a million bucks to keep your M.D.'s backside out of the malpractice sling, or to boost the value of his MRI stock? Not to me.

JOHN F. KELLY
Boulder, Colorado

Nature of the beast

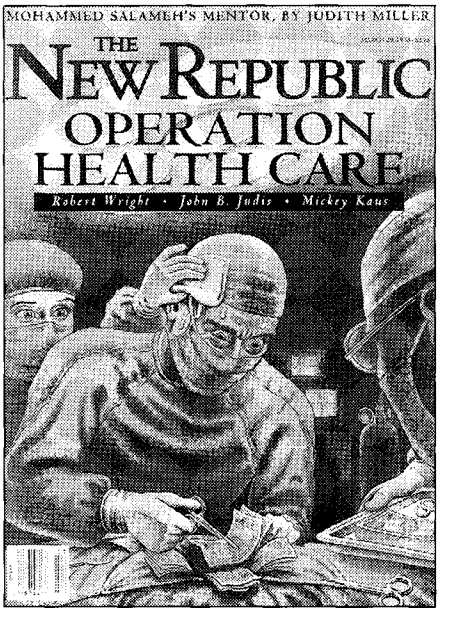
To the editors:

I waited in vain for an ironic note to creep into Ruth Shalit's article "Romper Room" (March 29), which identifies an employee of a state department of education as a sex-equity specialist and quotes sexual harassment activists who "[have] transformed the consciousness of the adult world and are beginning to tackle the playground." It is horrifying that critically underfunded school systems should be paying salaries to specialists in a field apparently dedicated to changing human nature.

Having just reared a son to the age of 17, I can vouch that a hostile environment exists on the playground, but sexual harassment is definitely not limited to the tormenting of little girls by little boys. Some of these activists admit this, but the males seem to be the main targets of their misguided attempts at setting guidelines and legislating normality. Such behavior as sexual gestures and ogling are indeed suffered by females from an early age, but male children must fight for their very honor.

There is no way out of harassment for little boys except by proving how tough they can be. My own son, who attended several different schools, had to bust somebody in the nose every school year before the bullies backed off. Some of those bullies were little girls. Physical violence is unavoidable in little boys' lives; at least what little girls endure is mainly only verbal.

The nature of the beast is that the male exhibits dominance, either by posturing or by physical force. Trying to legislate this natural human tendency out of existence by expelling "violators" from school will surely result in resentment in the breasts of those children who find subjugation of the weaker the only way to deal with their own feelings of inferiority. When these same children grow to adulthood, the seething resentment against females inspired by their punishments may explode in more adult forms of violence. If the time and effort wasted in playground policing and legislation lobbying were expended on teaching Johnny to read, he'd learn more about sexual equity than he would during his idle days of suspension or expulsion.



JUDY KOHLER
Reno, Nevada

True cost

To the editors:

Robert Wright correctly points out that 99.9 percent of magnetic resonance imaging brain scans do not reveal a problem worth treating ("The Technology Time Bomb," March 29). However, his estimate that we pay between $1 million and $3 million per life saved is unduly conservative. A tumor discovered is not necessarily a life saved. That depends on the type of tumor. For example, the discovery of a glioblastoma multiforme means a death sentence, not a life saved.

My professor of neurology had this to say about finding and treating a brain tumor: "When I have a glioma, I hope to have an incompetent neurologist and a clumsy neurosurgeon."

RONALD W. ANGEL, M.D.
Bellevue, Washington

Wisdom of William

To the editors:

In dressing down Stephen Rodrick for his comments on *Remembrance of Things Past* (Washington Diarist, January 18), Wilfred Kaplan (Correspondence, February 15) neglects Shakespeare's own source for "remembrance of things past." The New Penguin edition of the sonnets traces the phrase to the Apocrypha: "For their grief was double, and mourning for the remembrance of things past" (Wisdom of Solomon 11:12).

WINSTON LIN
Washington, D.C.

Mortified

To the editors:

In "The Bomb Threat" (March 29), you write: "Most pious Muslims, Arab and non-Arab, are mortified by what is often done in the name of the Koran." Did you take a vote? Have you read the Koran carefully? There is, for example, this passage: "And when ye meet those who mis-believe—then strike off their heads until ye have massacred them" (Qur'an/Koran xlvii, 15).

JUNE B. COSTELLO
Buffalo, New York

Editors' note: In the letter from Grover G. Norquist (Correspondence, March 29), the second paragraph should have concluded: "In *Beck* the Court ruled 7-2 that union members can ask for and receive back that portion of their dues not used for the negotiation and maintenance of

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

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FROM WASHINGTON

Haute cloture

Should Washington have had so much trouble deciding whom to back? On one side, we have a democratically elected president, struggling to transform his nation's debt-ridden economy. On the other side, reactionary legislators—mostly holdovers from the previous regime, chosen under an eccentric, unrepresentative system—using parliamentary maneuvers to frustrate the president's reform plans.

Yet somehow, in the current struggle between President Clinton and the Senate Republicans, Washingtonians seem to be secretly applauding the GOP. When Bob Dole, the Senate minority leader, was successfully blocking Clinton's initial $16 billion "stimulus" package, I kept waiting for the outraged editorials, or even op-editorials, in the usually Democratic *Washington Post*. None materialized. (The *Post* eventually adopted a weary "we'll see how it plays out" stance.) I waited, too, for expressions of disgust from my friends. There were none of those either. The predominant reaction seemed to be "Hey, look at the Republicans, finally getting their act together."

Why this non-response? Part of the explanation was simply that we here in the capital are easily bored. The "Clinton juggernaut" story was getting stale; the revival of the Republicans offered a promising new plot twist. Another part of the explanation was substantive: you didn't have to be a Republican to have doubts about Clinton's "stimulus." Was $2.5 billion added to the deficit to pay for "community development block grants" (CDBGs) really going to galvanize the economy? Weren't CDBGs really just slush funds for mayors—"pork"?

But there was also a misguided, insiders' sense of fairness at work. Yes, Clinton won the election, the argument seems to go. And yes, a majority of senators were ready to vote for his economic plan (which had already passed the House). But it takes 60 votes to cut off debate in the Senate, and there are only 57 Democrats. If Dole can muster all 43 Republicans to support a filibuster—well, as he put it, "we have every right under the rules to prevent this bill from passing." Dole was playing tough, but fair. In 1989 Senate Democrats had staged a filibuster of their own to block Bush's capital gains tax cut. The rules are the same for both teams.

But that doesn't mean the rules aren't crazy. There was a time not so long ago when this particular rule—allowing a mere two-fifths of the Senate to prevent a vote on a law—was considered an especially controversial bit of anti-democracy. Now would be a good moment to revive that sentiment. Because (as Washington insiders also agree) Dole's filibuster wasn't really about the Democratic "stimulus" package. It was about whether Clinton will be able to govern without continually appeasing the Republican minority. And it may have been about whether Clinton—or anyone—can govern, period.

The Founding Fathers didn't make governing easy. They created two elected branches of government and, within the legislative branch, two houses of Congress—all to ensure that any flame of popular sentiment would, in Madison's words, be "unable to spread a general conflagration." This was an effective scheme for thwarting majority tyranny. It also created the likelihood of divided government—"gridlock." When Republicans controlled the White House and Democrats controlled at least part of Congress, as occurred from 1981 to 1992, complaints about "gridlock" might be dismissed. Perhaps the voters were intentionally choosing inaction. Perhaps the government's inability to act, evidenced by the budget deficit, was just what the Fathers would have wanted. But what if one party finally wins control of all three power centers, remains unified and *still* can't pass its program? Then, surely, it's time to start worrying.

It's bad enough that the Fathers stuck us with the hideously malapportioned Senate in the first place. One reason Clinton had to abandon his plan to increase fees for grazing and mining on federal lands is that Montana's 799,000 citizens have the same power in the Senate as California's 30 million citizens. Do we really want a system in which a minority of this already unrepresentative body can thwart a national majority?

Certainly the Constitution itself didn't require that the Senate adopt its wacky tradition of unlimited debate. As Steven Smith of the University of Minnesota points out, the tradition began more or less by accident. Senators originally *could* cut off debate but found it rarely necessary. So when they wrote a new code of rules in 1806, the debate-ending provision was omitted on the grounds that it wasn't needed. Soon senators were busy exploiting the obstructionist possibilities of the filibuster, while explaining how unlimited debate made for a grand deliberative body.

In 1917 the Senate adopted its infamous Rule 22, under which a two-thirds vote was required for the cloture motion to end a filibuster. Rule 22 permitted segregationist Southerners to stall civil rights legislation until 1964, when the requisite two-thirds was finally mustered. In 1975 liberals, with much huffing and puffing, managed to obtain a tiny modification of Rule 22: only three-fifths of the entire Senate, rather than two-thirds of those present, would henceforth be needed for cloture.

In the years since this pathetically inadequate reform, filibusters have only become more common. Senators who wanted to stall a bill once had to actually stay up and orate around the clock. But new rules have taken the pain out of filibusters, letting the Senate consider some bills while others remain blocked. Today, as political scientist Norman Ornstein notes, senators "barely have to raise a finger to get a filibuster going." Instead of being reserved for intensely felt issues (like civil rights), filibusters are now routine. And what's happened to Clinton—use of the filibuster to prevent a vote on an incoming president's basic economic program—is unprecedented. Reagan didn't face such tactics in 1981. If the GOP had filibustered Roosevelt in 1933, we might not have had a New Deal.

Why not simply change Rule 22 by majority vote? Unfortunately, the rulemakers thought of that. Cutting off debate on ordinary legislation takes 60 votes. But cutting off debate on changing the rule for cutting off debate takes 67 votes. Any reforms that might actually allow majority rule are widely seen as doomed.

The dirty little secret is that virtually every senator—indeed, virtually all of Washington—has an interest in maintaining the undemocratic filibuster rules. The ability of a handful of senators to block legislation is one of the things that makes senators such big wheels. Now that Dole has pulled off his coup, for example, there are 43 Senate Republicans who are suddenly worth knowing and bribing with campaign contributions (and appeasing with pork-barrel projects). The lobbyists who have "access" to them are suddenly more valuable. And there are 43 additional political celebrities to be interviewed, so journalists are more in demand as well. That's the kind of "stimulus" Washington understands.

MICKEY KAUS

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

APRIL 26, 1993

HOW BILL CAN BLOW IT

BEGINNER'S LUCK OR PRESIDENT'S PROWESS? asks a recent headline in *The Washington Post.* DAZZLED CAPITOL WONDERS IF CLINTON CAN KEEP LIGHTING UP THE BOARD. Don't bet on it. There are two ways the president's early achievement could rapidly unravel, and he seems perversely open to both of them.

A deficit reduction program, unlike most of life's endeavors, can be judged by a simple index: long-term interest rates. They are both a reflection of the program's success and the medium of its influence. Closing the deficit brings these rates down, lowering the cost of credit. Investment in plant, machinery and research then grows. The notoriously short time horizons of American corporations expand as long-term thinking becomes more affordable.

Whatever your complaints about the Clinton budget package—and we have some of our own—you'll be hard-pressed to deny its central accomplishment: it was honest enough (by Washington standards) to bring long-term rates to their lowest point in well over a decade. In other words, the bond market believed in the package—that it would pass Congress and that it would work. This confidence is more than an auspicious sign; the lowered rates are a real and vital benefit in themselves, and have boosted investment already.

The biggest domestic blunder President Clinton could make would be to somehow drive long-term rates upward. Assuming the budget package doesn't fall apart (an assumption that has become slightly less tenable of late), how might this happen? Two possibilities leap to mind.

One is protectionism. Tariffs, import quotas and unwise subsidies are inflationary. Full-fledged trade wars are *very* inflationary. And looming inflation is the bond market's greatest fear; nothing so certainly sends interest rates upward.

The problem here isn't just that the administration seems increasingly inclined either to eviscerate or to scuttle the inflation-dampening North American Free Trade Agreement. And it isn't just that Trade Representative Mickey Kantor's pronouncements of firm resolve sometimes seem needlessly antagonistic. More alarming is that Clinton has lately equaled Kantor in stridency. And most alarming is that Clinton seems genuinely clueless as to the link between trade and interest rates.

Consider the proposed placement of tariffs on Japanese minivans under the pretense that they're "trucks." Clinton decried President Bush's failure to impose these tariffs, calling it "a $300 million-a-year freebie" for Japan. "We got nothing, and I emphasize nothing, in return." *Nothing?* Ask the American consumers who together saved $300 million on minivans. Ask the people who compile the consumer price index. Ask the bond traders who scrutinize that index religiously, and respond to every upward tick by sending interest rates higher.

Clinton's other looming disaster is health care policy. Any deficit-boosting health insurance package will raise interest rates (assuming the bond market hasn't already anticipated the damage). And Hillary Rodham Clinton seems bent on massively boosting the deficit.

This magazine has long advocated universal medical coverage. But providing it in a fiscally responsible fashion means limiting its depth. ("Rationing" is the impolite term.) We're not talking about giving poor people a special, bare-bones package that offers a fraction of the normal coverage. We're talking about making bare-bones coverage the generic American package, and letting patients pay for additional care (or supplementary insurance). Bringing middle-class Americans in touch with the costs of their health care is the only way to keep ever burgeoning medical technology from consuming an ever growing fraction of economic output.

The Clintons are sending mixed signals here. It's encouraging that the president is letting Oregon proceed with a Medicaid rationing plan. But meanwhile Hillary Clinton is (for example) insisting that treatment for mental illness be guaranteed all Americans. This would create an endless stream of largely ineffectual spending unless "mental illness" were defined with an austerity she seems unlikely to muster. (Mercifully, chances of the administration's muddled health care philosophy becoming reality this year are beginning to diminish. But we're not out of the woods yet.)

High interest rates are high interest rates. It matters little whether they result from trade tariffs or from an overly well-meaning health care policy. Either way, they hurt the economy. Either way, they negate the president's impressive achievements on the deficit front. When interest rates began creeping back upward in late March and early April, real, if minor, damage was done to the nation's long-term economic health. It may be no coincidence that this creeping began shortly after the president started sounding so hard on Japan and his wife started sounding so soft on the subject of health care. •

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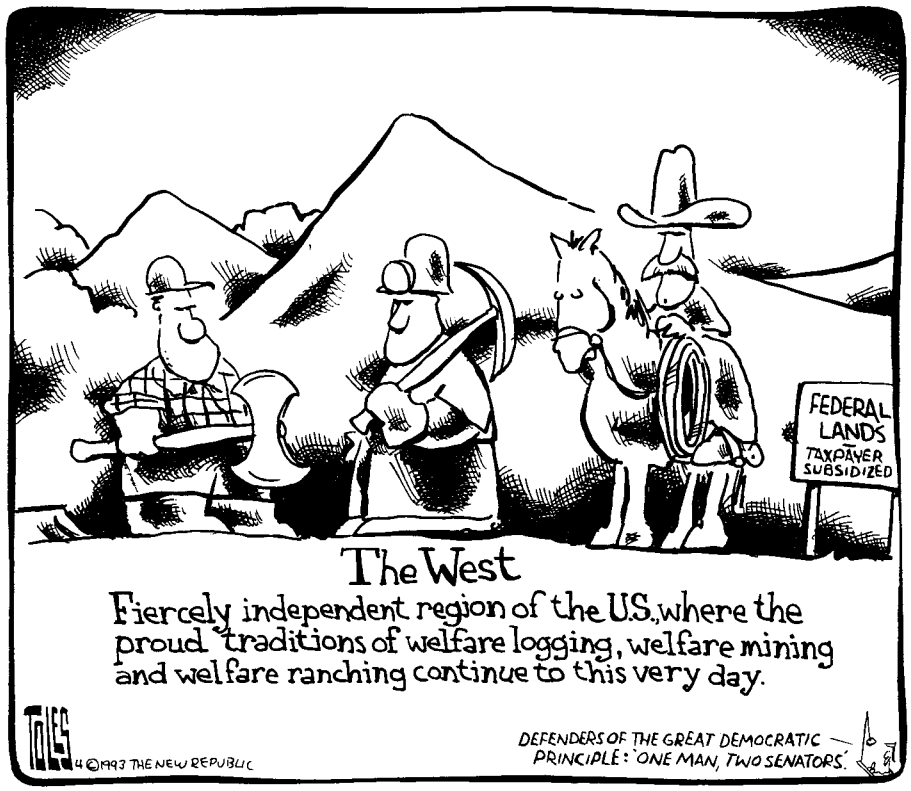
NOTEBOOK

SERBIAN VICTORY DAY: It's clear that, barring any extraordinary turn of events, Serbia has now all but conquered Bosnia-Herzegovina. It's also clear that, as Slobodan Milosevic blurted out this week, the United Nations and the United States actively helped this conquest along. The failure, on the breakup of Yugoslavia, to recognize and support the newly independent states was the first error, an error made primarily by the Europeans but compounded by the Bush administration. But this was made worse by the continuing reluctance by the West to allow the Bosnians to arm themselves and then by the pathetic efforts to negotiate the Serbs into submission, when this negotiation was supported by no force or credible threat of force. Slowly, the architects of this strategy, Cyrus Vance and David Owen, were forced to recognize its hollowness; and slowly, the U.N. was forced to concede that its peacekeeping efforts were hardly more than cleanup operations after Serbian atrocities. It is perhaps understandable that the Clinton administration felt unable to act more decisively in the conflict. It inherited a mess from its predecessor and had few viable options. The president clearly felt qualms about American acquiescence in brutality; and the Vance-Owen plan left a sour taste even in Warren Christopher's mouth. To have acted unilaterally in bombing Serbian positions or arming the Bosnians would have risked a major foreign policy goal—stabilizing Russia—and garnered very little domestic support. Nevertheless, there are moments that demand from the United States more than moral posturing. The occupation of Bosnia, the ethnic massacres by the Serbs, the threat Milosevic still poses to Central Europe, all contributed to such a moment. History, we suspect, will be harsh on those who passed it by.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DEFENDERS OF THE GREAT DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLE: 'ONE MAN, TWO SENATORS'

EGYPT CALLING: President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt asked President Clinton last week to press Israel to accelerate the return of the 400 Islamic extremists temporarily expelled last December after a wave of violence committed in the name of two Palestinian terrorists groups. Clinton smartly refused. Mubarak's expectation that the Rabin government offer additional concessions to Hamas and Islamic jihad so they might sanction a Palestinian delegation rejoining the peace talks was a particularly strange instance of the double standard. After all, the Egyptians (and the Algerians, too) summarily kill the ideological cousins of the men Israel has simply put across the border. The killings seem to merit only an inch or two in the press (and hardly thirty seconds on CNN), which, of course, doesn't cavil at calling these dead "terrorists." One can imagine the outcry if Israeli security forces surrounded some fundamentalist mosque and lobbed shells at it until no one inside was alive, which is basically what the Cairo authorities have been doing. Well, Israel doesn't behave that way, and shouldn't. But this doesn't mean that it ought to readmit those who believe the murder of Jews is Allah's work.

STRIP TEASE: Unless your name is Garry Trudeau, don't try injecting social realism into America's funny papers. The first recent occasion of toon-chilling came when angry readers berated the vanilla "Cathy" for daring to use the word "swirlie," a rather common term for an adolescent prank involving placing someone's head in the toilet. Some prudish readers apparently misconstrued "swirlie" as slang for oral sex. And then twenty papers, including Bill Clinton's hometown paper, the Arkansas *Democrat-Gazette*, dropped Lynn Johnston's "For Better or For Worse" for having the audacity to include a 17-year-old boy coming to grips with homosexuality in its story line. We dread to think, in retrospect, what some might make of the unnaturally close relationship between Calvin and Hobbes. Come to think of it, Snoopy seems a bit of a confirmed bachelor himself. •

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THE FLAPJACK FILE

FEELING THE PAIN

By Douglas G. McGrath

Monday, April 5, 1993

I haven't written in here since good old Shrub said goodbye. It isn't the same around here without him—there hasn't been a single game of night archery since he left. We also had to disconnect the beer vat Mrs. Shrub kept under her bed; and get rid of a dog Millie gave birth to. Her pregnancy had been kept out of the press since the Shrubs didn't know who the father was, but the puppy died, so Mr. Carville took it for some stew he was making.

Then, of course, we had to come up with a code name for the new president. This was hard. You can find it by focusing on a physical trait of his, as we did when we thought of President Eisenhower's head and named him "Melonball." President Carter and "Liverlips"—same thing. You can do it by thinking of a weird quirk in his personality. President Johnson's name, for instance, was "Toilet-talker." Or you can pick a name that sums up the president's character, the way FDR was called "Prince Valiant" and Gerald Ford, "Lucky."

For President Clinton, Agent Simons suggested "Hopehead." Duncan pushed for "Señor Libido." (This wasn't allowed because it was President Kennedy's code name.) "The Boss's Husband" was rejected because it reminded people of President Reagan. Agent Askin said, "Look, he's big and round and constantly flips positions. What would that be?" I said, "Flapjack!" and everybody clapped. (My first code name! What an honor.) Mrs. C. was easy. We're calling her The Rod.

And then all these summits! The Timber summit was the killer. First, Flapjack wouldn't get off the plane. He was in the bathroom with Mr. Stephanopoulos practicing his lip biting. "Bite a little more forward," Mr. Steph told him. "That's good, very good, it's boyish but still shows some sexuality—no, no, you've gone too far! You're into Jerry Lewis! Back up!"

Once we got Flapjack and Mr. Steph off the plane, the crowd went wild—especially the women and girls. Screaming and crying and begging for him to touch them. He waved and twenty teenagers fainted. Several of them threw articles of their clothing at him. But after Mr. Steph got in his car and left, it quieted right down.

Later, Flapjack went with a logger who hadn't worked in sixteen months because of the controversy about the spotted owl. "Thank you for sharing your pain with me," Flapjack told the logger, using his new lip bite. "I heard what you were saying when I listened to you speaking. And I felt not only your pain but the pain of all Americans who are working harder for less pay than they made ten years ago. And I not only felt the pain of you and everyone else in the country, but I also felt the pain of the owl, a forty-centimeter-long bird of prey characterized by a conspicuous facial disk but lacking ear tufts. And I just feel so strongly that we can become a great country again if we work together the way our founding fathers did in Philadelphia, and feel each other's pain and listen to each other's pain and then talk about what we felt when we heard that pain. You feel hurt by the bird, I feel hurt by my father. Thank you for being upset with me. Short of action, I will do anything to help you."

Wednesday, April 7

It always takes a while to get to know the president and his family. But finally, me and the other guys are here so much, they let down their guard and we get to see them as they really are. Last night it happened.

There was a state dinner honoring Yo-Yo Ma and the Bloodworth-Thomasons. Flapjack was saying goodbye to the last three guests, Elie Wiesel, Paul Starr and Jose Berical, the president of Chiquita bananas. He shook their hands and said, "Thank you for sharing your feelings about the Holocaust, managed competition and the benefits of a high-fiber diet. Your pain is my pain."

But as soon as they left, something strange happened. Flapjack cracked his back and scratched himself. "Whooo-ey!" he said, popping open his tux. "Let's strip us out of these skin-squeezers and take us a night plop in the dippin' hole!" Secret Service regulation 467a says, "Agents are not allowed to have anything on their face including an expression," but I have to report that my jaw dropped. The Rod swung to him, furious. "Bill, watch yourself in front of Agent Duke! He doesn't know!"

Flapjack laughed and said, "Come on, Little Mama! Dukee's with us forty-two hours a day! He oughter know the truth."

She reached for an ashtray, but we don't have any since she banned smoking in the White House. (She threw a lamp instead.) "*Don't* call me Little Mama!" she shrieked. (I don't know what she was so upset about. "Little Mama" is a cut above "Dukee.")

Just then, Chelsea came in with a pot of hot grits. "Beauty time!" she said, sweetly.

Flapjack looked relieved. "Good girly!" he said to her, as The Rod grudgingly dropped her head back on the table. "Pour on Mama's grit pack!"

He put his arm around me and Simons and we went with him to the pool. "I know why you're all pop-eyed there, Dukee. It's on account of how I stopped my Harvard-talking, isn't it?" I nodded. "Well, I've always had me a hankering to be president. And when I met Hillary, she told me it warn't gonna happen if I talked country-style like this. So she taught me this blue-blood tongue. But I cain't help it. When all the monkey suits and the $300 hairdos get out of here, I like to talk like I

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like to talk. Is that going to bother you? Am I gonna need to feel your pain on this issue?" I smiled and said no.

At the pool, he stripped off his shirt. Over one pec he had a tattoo of Tennessee Ernie Ford and over the other, Felix Rohatyn. He did a canonball off the high dive.

As Flapjack floated around blowing water, Agent Simons whispered to me, "It's times like this I wish I kept a diary."

"Don't worry," I thought. "I'm back on the job."

DOUGLAS G. MCGRATH is a New York writer.

WASHINGTON SCENE

THE LOBBYIST IS IN

By Ruth Shalit

On March 29 Hillary Rodham Clinton's Health Care Task Force, criticized for its secrecy, held its first public hearing. The event was scripted to showcase the Clintonites' common touch. "Legislation has more often than not been the product of quiet deliberations of a few people huddled in a dark room," mused Vice President Al Gore, presiding over the hearing in the First Lady's absence. "But our health care task force has reached literally across the country." Now the Clintonites wanted to do even more. So they invited a sampling of the citizenry—"over sixty groups, representing literally millions of Americans," said Gore—to enlighten the task force with their home-grown truths and "real-world expertise." "The days of business as usual are over," promised the vice president.

Not quite. When it comes to the spontaneous display of popular emotion, the Clintonites prefer to play it safe. To provide a glimpse of life beyond the Beltway, they turned to those who'd never left it. The AFL-CIO American Association of Retired Persons, Children's Defense Fund and fifty-seven other special pleaders were summoned to George Washington University's Charles E. Smith Auditorium, presented with badges identifying them as "witnesses," and trotted out for the C-SPAN cameras as apostles of the public will. "I almost called you 'Mr. Chairman'!" chortled a pharmaceutical industry "witness" to task force member Lloyd Bentsen, harkening back to days of lobbying before the Senate Finance Committee.

He may as well have. "Just about all the groups who testified have had private meetings with the task force already," admits a White House spokesman. Most saw themselves as connoisseurs of the Beltway inside game. Former Carter advisor Stuart Eizenstat was there, performing a star turn as witness for the Health Industry Manufacturers Association. "I know all the key participants," Eizenstat told me. "I've already had a long meeting with Ira [Magaziner]. I knew Donna [Shalala] when she was an assistant secretary at HUD. Bob [Reich] and I taught together at Harvard. It's always nice to be on the other side of the table." But not as nice as being on the same side. Four days after his appearance as a bearer of fresh intelligence from the heartland, Eisenstat was being vetted for the job of ambassador to the European Community.

The task force public hearing was more than just a day of one-stop shopping for upwardly mobile lobbyists, however. It was, as the vice president frequently reminded those present, a "historic outreach." And when you're making history, there's no time to spare. So the Clintonites' ambitious effort to "reach out and listen to all sides ... to seek out the very best advice" was telescoped into a single day-long event, with each participant given three minutes to present his or her views. "The timers in front will turn yellow when one minute remains," intoned the vice president. "The red light indicates that your time is up."

Three minutes was time enough for most of the witnesses to do their part for history. "Whatever you do, empower the pharmacist," counseled Dr. Charles West of the National Association of Retail Druggists. "Health care reform will place a premium on the use of alternative providers like P.A.s," predicted Ann Elderkin of the American Academy of Physicians' Assistants. Reeve Askew of the American Chiropractic Association argued that "policies must focus on increasing freedom of choice" through "expanded access to licensed non-M.D.s," yes, "like chiropractors." Bryant Welch of the American Psychological Association informed the panel of an "enormous unmet need for mental health care." And John Mahoney, president of the National Hospice Association, vowed that hospice care would have "an ever greater impact" as the population aged. "Hospice care puts people first," he bravely argued. "We cannot leave it out of the plan."

Others tried a different tack. "I want to compliment all of you for your tremendous, tremendous effort," burbled Bill Keane of the Campaign for Long-Term Care. "What you're asking us to do is take a look at our value system, take a look at what's really important. And I think you'll see that between womb and tomb you have this bubble, which is long-term care." For some, it all proved a bit much. "Institutions motivated by healing and wholeness have fallen victim to the competitive mindset of the '80s," bemoaned a hospital lobbyist. "We must seek our communities' forgiveness and change our behavior."

From the National Commission to Preserve Social Security/Medicare to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the witnesses constituted a powerful phalanx of gridlock specialists—many of whom will oppose Clinton as he shepherds his health reform scheme through

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Congress. This fact was not permitted to deface the president's tableau of inclusion. Panel One, stacked with representatives from senior citizens groups, was pronounced "tremendously helpful to the task force." Panel Three, a set piece of race and gender activists, was "a remarkable panel." Panel 10, the union panel, was "constructive and interesting and useful." And so on, into the special interest twilight.

In keeping with Clinton's status as a "new kind of Democrat," there were ceremonial displays of political courage. When Robert Rubin, chair of the President's Economic Policy Council, asked the business panel for its thoughts on price controls, the answer came quickly. "We're against them," said Margaret Smith of the National Association of Small Businesses. "As entrepreneurs, we've seen that they don't work. We can take a lesson from the past." Rubin then zoomed in for the kill. "But how would you feel about a price control system that was actually *effective*?" he asked. "If persuaded that they *could* work, would you be more favorably disposed?" Smith looked bewildered. "Uh, it's possible," she said. "We'd have to see the details." Rubin leaned back in satisfaction.

Gore went one step further in cross-examination. "Is it the position of the organizations on the panel that you won't support the plan unless you agree with it 100 percent? Or that you'll support the plan even if there are one or two elements that you're not comfortable with?" The panelists, C-SPAN glaring down upon them, assured him that indeed, they didn't have to agree with 100 percent of the plan to support it. Gore looked triumphant. "So," he announced, "there is a willingness to compromise."

Rubin and Gore weren't the only high-octane idea brokers in attendance. Clinton's Cabinet was there in force, frowning down on the witnesses like a star chamber of celebrity professors. They had been summoned not only to add luster to the proceedings, but to flaunt their mastery of policy fiefdoms. Attorney General Janet Reno dutifully voiced concern over the impact of drugs and violence on the health care system. Labor Secretary Robert Reich furrowed his brow over the wage structure of home health care workers. Veterans Affairs Secretary Jesse Brown pointed with pride to V.A. hospitals. Sometimes their presence seemed relevant. More often, they just sat there, looking bored and annoyed as witness Jack Harris of the American Dental Association prattled on about the application of fluoride treatments.

Clinton's appropriation of populist standards and mechanisms—the eschewing of smoke-filled rooms for a nationally televised effort to "reach out and listen to all sides"—has won him the admiration of columnists. As the health care public hearing shows, this apparatus of inclusion is easily scriptable. But real-life democracy is not. The manufacture of consent doesn't guarantee the manufacture of a plan. Thanks in part to time wasted on pseudo-events like the public hearing, the health care task force has already blown its ninety-day deadline to generate one. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

BILL AND BORIS

By Fred Barnes

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

The night before the summit in Vancouver, President Clinton got the word on Russian President Boris Yeltsin—not Yeltsin the reformer or Yeltsin the anti-Communist, but Yeltsin the man. Over dinner with aides at the Benson Hotel in Portland, Oregon, where he'd just held an all-day "forest conference," Clinton was told Yeltsin runs hot and cold. "At some points, he's genial and low-key," said a senior Clinton aide. "At others, he presses. He presses very hard." The next day, April 3, in the summit's first one-on-one session, Yeltsin was easygoing until he broached the subject of Jackson-Vanik, the American law that barred the Soviet Union from getting favored trade status with the United States until all refuseniks were allowed to emigrate. Yeltsin was indignant. "Listen," he said, "I'm a democrat." Communism is gone, and Jackson-Vanik should be abrogated. Clinton tried to calm Yeltsin. He conceded Yeltsin had a point and promised to move quickly to end Jackson-Vanik if an investigation shows no refuseniks remain. Yeltsin was mollified.

This is what passes for conflict between the United States and Russia after communism. The episode was fleeting, the disagreement less than fundamental, leaving Clinton time to achieve his two chief objectives. First, he managed to come to Yeltsin's aid without making the Russian look like a hapless supplicant. Second, he showed he could play the game deftly at the highest international level. No, this wasn't the same as being tested under real fire, as cold war presidents often were and George Bush was in the Gulf. The stakes were far lower at Vancouver. But Clinton had to play the hand dealt him, and he got on well with Yeltsin and wasn't bullied. At the press conference culminating the summit, Yeltsin announced they'd decided to "do away with Jackson-Vanik." Clinton gently corrected him. "He's going to look into that," Clinton said. "I'm going to go back and raise that issue with Congress."

Clinton didn't waste any time redeeming his promise. Flying back to Washington aboard Air Force One, he accepted the congratulations of his staff. "A huge success," one aide said. Then Clinton telephoned House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt, who was leading a congressional delegation in Moscow. They talked about Jackson-Vanik, among

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other things, as Clinton reviewed everything that had occurred at the summit. Meanwhile, Strobe Talbott, the new ambassador for Russian aid, convened a meeting in the plane's conference room. Assignments were handed out to State Department and National Security Council officials. Actually, no one had to be told to follow up on Jackson-Vanik. A State Department official had already called Washington from Vancouver International Airport before Air Force One departed. His instructions were to begin the investigation of Jackson-Vanik cases immediately. This was roughly 9 o'clock Sunday evening, Washington time.

Bush probably would have moved swiftly to live up to personal promises to Yeltsin. But there were two things different about the Clinton approach. Clinton is far more committed to Yeltsin personally than Bush or his aides were. Clinton not only expressed his support repeatedly in public. His aides said the same thing in private. As Clinton conferred with Yeltsin, a top Clinton adviser mingled with reporters outside. He insisted Yeltsin is a "true democrat" and a real reformer. Rather than seeking autocratic rule, Yeltsin achieved "precisely the opposite" by "preventing a takeover" by reactionary and Communist forces. Bush and his aides were deeply skeptical of Yeltsin, worrying aloud whether he was stable and committed to democracy. Perhaps this stemmed from Bush's close relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev, the man Yeltsin opposed and then ousted.

But the other difference was politics. Bush regarded politics as apart from governing. Clinton believes, correctly, the two shouldn't be separated. He knew he had something to gain (or lose) politically in Vancouver. He left little to chance. Planning began weeks before. In mid-March, Clinton bounced a proposed aid package back to his aides as insufficiently bold. In its place, they produced a package that consisted of more than warmed-over Bush ideas. And they scrounged enough in already authorized funds to make the package bigger. (To keep the price tag a surprise, Yeltsin wasn't informed of it until his one-on-one session with Clinton.) The result: better play in the media. Clinton also recruited Mort Engleberg, a Hollywood producer who staged campaign events for Clinton last year. This time, Engleberg made sure Bill and Boris appeared in the right setting, first among a gaggle of schoolkids, then standing on a promontory over the Pacific.

Before, during and after the summit, Clinton stuck to prefabricated themes with the discipline of a presidential candidate. I counted four. First was the notion that aid to Russia isn't charity. It's a good investment for America. Clinton didn't want to make Yeltsin look like a guy clacking a tin cup, and he wanted to dress up the assistance as more than foreign aid, which most Americans loathe. When he arrived for his first meeting with Yeltsin, Clinton said, "This is not a talk about aid. This is a talk about a long-term partnership." After the session, he declared, "This is not in any way an act of charity." And in his Saturday radio address, he argued that helping Russia was good for American jobs since keeping Russia democratic would allow the United States to spend less on defense, "more for creating new businesses" and so on. Nice try, Mr. President.

Theme No. 2 was the administration's full-blown commitment to democratic reform in Russia over the long haul. "We actively support reform and reformers and you in Russia," Clinton told Yeltsin at their joint press conference, swerving to look at Yeltsin and not the T.V. cameras as he said it. To punctuate the point, Clinton talked up a second aid package to be unveiled in time for a meeting of G-7 foreign and finance ministers in Tokyo in mid-April. This would entail new money to be appropriated by Congress and a long-term commitment to assisting Russia. The $1.6 billion announced in Vancouver included only funds appropriated during the Bush presidency.

The third and fourth themes involve the degree and pace of reform in Russia. Clinton used an analogy with America to argue that instant results should not be expected. He first used it in a very effective pre-summit speech, written by Jeremy Rossner of the National Security Council staff. He repeated it when he arrived for his first talk with Yeltsin. "It was well over a decade [after the Declaration of Independence] before we actually settled on a Constitution and got around to electing a president," Clinton said. The final theme was a tacit one. Yeltsin said in public and in private that there's no viable alternative to him in Russia. "Perhaps there will be one tomorrow, but certainly not one today," he said. Clinton put the matter differently, and the difference is important. American interests and values "are embodied by the policies and the direction of President Yeltsin. They are enduring. He is the duly-elected president of Russia. And as long as he is, I intend to work with him and support him." Clinton did not say: après Yeltsin, le déluge. He doesn't believe that. He wants Yeltsin to succeed, but believes democratic reform is possible without him.

Clinton said he didn't feel under pressure in Vancouver. Nonsense. He was under pressure to perform effectively on the world stage. He accomplished that by charming Yeltsin. Among Clinton's many getting-along skills is the ability to listen (one reason he's always late). He spent nearly an hour listening to Yeltsin hold forth about Russian politics. Next he outlined the aid package. By their working dinner, Yeltsin was spouting praise. In a toast he called the aid package "well thought out, wise and even elegant." He said Clinton was a fellow populist, seeing the problems of Russia through the eyes of an ordinary American. It's safe to say Clinton has a new friend. All that remains is for him to stay in power. •

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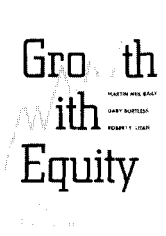

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SPRING '93

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The jurisprudence of Mario.

CUOMO VADIS

By Jeffrey Rosen

There is an occupational hazard of writing about Mario Cuomo: even if you are generally sympathetic to him, he'll call to correct you. And the New York governor was not daunted by his status as the front-runner for the next Supreme Court seat. (As this article went to press, his office confirmed reports that he has sent a letter to the president withdrawing his name from consideration; but Cuomo has been known to change his mind before.) No sooner had I written a piece speculating about Cuomo's constitutional philosophy in light of his youthful law review articles (see "Court Test," TNR, September 28, 1992) than the phone rang.

"I have one quibble with your piece," Governor Cuomo said, combatively but amiably. "You say: 'Never mind the hypocrisy of Democrats (including Cuomo) who criticized Presidents Reagan and Bush for applying a litmus test on *Roe* and have accepted Clinton's identical test with enthusiasm.' When did I ever accept the litmus test?" On Albany radio in July, I replied, Cuomo had said that the *Casey* decision "could very well mean Bill Clinton's election" because Clinton would "pick people for the Supreme Court who he believes will protect abortion rights." "Exactly," said Cuomo. "Who *Clinton* believes will protect abortion. But I didn't endorse it."

The distinction seemed legalistic but not completely implausible; and encouraged by Cuomo's banter, I joked that perhaps it hadn't been fair to resurrect two youthful law review articles he had published during his ten years as a lecturer at St. John's Law School. In one of them, "Appellate Advocacy: Some Observations and Suggestions," which appeared in the *Revista del Colegio de Abogados de Puerto Rico* (1963), Cuomo had observed that the New York Court of Appeals, on which he clerked from 1956-58, was less concerned with legal precedents than with doing justice: "The existence of a *contrary line of decisional authority will not obstruct the pursuit of what is fair and just here and now.*" He then seemed to approve of the sentiment, insisting that "the attorney who does nothing more than feed legal data to the Bench misconceives his function.... *The major thrust*—however cloaked in authority—*must be toward the court's sense of equity and fairness.*" Perhaps in the intervening thirty years, Cuomo had changed his mind.

"No," Cuomo replied. "I still believe what I said. And do you want to know where I got that? An article by Karl Llewellyn, 'How Appellate Courts Decide Cases.' It's the most insightful article I've ever read about how judges really decide. Go read the Llewellyn article, call me back, and we'll talk some more."

I then raised the issue that concerned me most. Dan Quayle had declared on the campaign trail that Cuomo, as a justice, would declare capital punishment unconstitutional. But the charge was unsubstantiated: Cuomo has never publicly indicated his views on the constitutionality—as opposed to the morality—of the death penalty. Asking the question directly seemed the most reliable test of Cuomo's ability to separate his personal preferences from his constitutional judgments. "Do you think capital punishment is unconstitutional under the Eighth Amendment?" I asked. "How can I answer a question like that?" Cuomo replied. "I would need to know the facts, I would need to know the particular circumstances. I can't answer a hypothetical like that." But isn't this an easy question? The text of the Constitution allows capital punishment, and there is no plausible argument that the people who ratified the Eighth Amendment, or the people today, think it's cruel and unusual. "Ah Rosen, Rosen," Cuomo replied, "you need to practice law for a while."

Soon after the conversation ended, I read the article Cuomo had recommended. Karl Llewellyn, who taught contracts, commercial law and jurisprudence at Columbia from 1924 to 1951, was arguably the greatest of the legal realists. He wrote "How Appellate Courts Decide Cases" for the Brandeis Lawyers Society in 1945, and then incorporated the monograph into his most important work, *The Common Law Tradition: Deciding Appeals*, in 1960. (Cuomo actually cites the *Common Law*, rather than the monograph, in his own article on appellate advocacy.) The Llewellyn article is colloquial and provocative: "Every last one of you has been trained in the silly ideology that the rules of law decide cases, which they never did and never will." Instead of the pretense of legal formalism, Llewellyn calls for a resurrection of the "Grand Style" of common law judging that prevailed in the early nineteenth century: "the recurrence to sense, horse sense, sense outside the law, tested from outside the law and stated quite openly on the face of the opinion as a guide to decision."

The week after Byron White announced his intention to resign, I wrote to Cuomo, suggesting that in light of the Llewellyn article, I continued to have some concerns about his affinity for legal realism. The governor called again, but this time he was much more aggressive. "There's a budget bill on my desk and I only have a minute," he said. "But there's something in your letter I didn't understand. Where did I ever express an 'affinity for legal realism'?" In your law review article, I said. "What article?" Cuomo asked. The one you said was inspired by Llewellyn, the one we discussed. "When did we discuss an article? Where was it published? When did it appear?" In the *Revista del Colegios de Abogados*, 1963. You called to talk about it. "Oh, that article," said Cuomo, abruptly shifting gears. "That was an article about the

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way the court *was* deciding cases. I said Llewellyn was the single most insightful article I had read about what *was* happening. But I didn't say whether it's a good idea."

Well, is it a good idea? I asked unnerved by the odd exchange. "I was talking to lawyers about how to address courts," Cuomo replied. "I said these courts are basically interested, in the end, about what is just. They have to make it fit the law; it has to comport. I didn't say this is the way it should work. That's for brighter people than I." But didn't you say you agreed with Llewellyn? "Some of the opinions he referred to I had worked on [as a law clerk]. I was amazed at the guy's insight, amazed at what he knew that was not in the opinion. It's as if he were listening in on the confidential conferences of the Court. But I didn't say if I agreed."

If you're not a legal realist, I asked, then what is your judicial philosophy? This was Governor Cuomo's reply:

> It would be as hard to answer that as to say what is your philosophy of umpiring. How can you fix in advance the way you're supposed to call the pitches as they occur? It's very much an ad hoc thing. Maybe after you do a lot of ad hoc things, they say that's the way it was. But that's creating the philosophy retroactively.

MARIO CUOMO BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The telephone conversations and the law review articles are revealing on several levels. The first concerns Cuomo's refusal to articulate a constitutional philosophy. Despite Clinton's claim that Cuomo "spends more time reading and writing and thinking about [constitutional] issues than any other elected official I know," Cuomo actually has written little on the subject. (A 1986 speech to the ABA makes reassuring noises about judicial restraint; but it is too vague to be helpful.) Cuomo claims, uniquely among politicians, to be a legal intellectual; but when challenged to define an intellectual vision, he retreats into the sports metaphors of an "umpire." He invokes Llewellyn, moreover, as an academic pedigree for his pragmatism; but when Llewellyn becomes inconvenient, Cuomo backs away.

In fact, Cuomo might be more persuasive as an unapologetic Llewellynite. In the *The Common Law Tradition*, on the same pages that Cuomo cites in his 1963 article, Llewellyn explicitly rejected the "is/ought" distinction Cuomo now invokes. The best judges are *and should be* guided by policy considerations, Llewellyn argued: "The Grand Style is the best device ever invented by man for drying up that free-flowing spring of uncertainty, conflict between the seeming commands of the authorities and the felt demands of justice." But Llewellyn did not see the Grand Style as a license for run-amok judicial policy-making. Unlike earlier legal realists (such as Jerome Frank) who were more cynical about the distinction between law and politics, Llewellyn emphasized the constraints as well as the leeways of common law judging. He argued that judges are constrained not by precedents or legal rules, but by their "situational sense," by the facts of each case, by real life norms and by prudence and tradition.

Whatever Cuomo chooses to call himself, his vision of the justice as umpire is quintessentially realist. The vocabulary he uses to disclaim a judicial philosophy is a Llewellynian vocabulary. ("*Realism* is *not* a philosophy, but a *technology*," Llewellyn wrote in a famous italicized passage in the *Common Law*.) This is not surprising for a man like Cuomo, whose formative intellectual experience in the law was a two-year clerkship on an important state supreme court. Most of the cases Cuomo worked on during his clerkship—which he has often called the best job he ever had—were private law disputes between private parties: a guest sues a host for reckless driving; a businessman sues a manufacturer for failure to deliver 400,000 pounds of aluminum; a patient sues a doctor for $15,000 worth of mental anguish after unhealed burns; and so forth. (Llewellyn devoted an entire appendix in *The Common Law Tradition* to 1958 cases from the New York Court of Appeals.) In cases like

continued on page 18

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these, judges are expected to "do justice" and to "make the law," updating old legal principles to meet changing circumstances.

But Supreme Court justices play a very different role. Their most important duty is to interpret the Constitution, not to find pragmatic solutions to disputes between private parties. They are authorized to strike down the acts of democratic legislatures only when the acts conflict with the text and history of the Constitution, not with the justices' sense of equity and good policy. And it is worth noting that previous attempts to apply common law techniques to constitutional adjudication have raised serious questions of democratic legitimacy.

Llewellyn, for example, was a disaster as a constitutional theorist. In a 1934 article, he compared judges who focus on constitutional text and history, modestly averting their eyes from "real life," to "some Victorian virgin tubbing in a nightgown." And the ignominious culmination of his constitutional realism was his opposition to *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, which he thought insufficiently sensitive to settled social practices. In "What Law Cannot Do for Inter-Racial Peace" (1957), Llewellyn argued "that the process of having 'Other' kinds of folk, 'Different' folk, 'Outsiders,' in the team of your working outfit is a *slow* process." He then offered an ugly cost-benefit analysis of the comparative social tension that might result from desegregating hotels, restaurants, bars, beaches and schools. Llewellyn's blinkered realism shows the dangers of entrusting constitutional interpretation to justices who are inclined to balance constitutional principles against their own pragmatic sense of what society can bear.

Would Cuomo, steeped in common law pragmatism on the New York Court of Appeals, be such a justice? His answer to the question about capital punishment is not reassuring. Instead of focusing on the textual and historical evidence that the people who ratified the Eighth Amendment, and the people today, never intended to ban the death penalty in all circumstances, Cuomo wants to be pragmatic: "I would need to know the facts, I would need to know the particular circumstances.... You need to practice law for a little while." Certainly, facts and circumstances are relevant to every death penalty appeal; and there is a serious argument that capital punishment may be unconstitutional in practice, if not in theory, because it is administered against blacks much more frequently than whites. But unless Cuomo can unequivocally reject the position of Thurgood Marshall and William Brennan—that capital punishment is, always and everywhere, a form of cruel and unusual punishment—it is hard to be confident of his ability to separate his moral judgments from his constitutional ones.

The conversations also raise concern about Cuomo's temperament. Like Antonin Scalia, he has the manner of an intellectual bully; and his combative debating style, with its barrage of legalistic—and at times sophistic—distinctions, runs the risk of alienating those who are otherwise inclined to be sympathetic to his arguments. As Scalia's experience shows, bullying is the surest way to drive away the cautious swing justices, Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy and David Souter. If Clinton is genuinely concerned about building a new majority, he might do better with a less volatile personality.

It is not clear, finally, that Cuomo is prepared to carry out the overriding tasks of the next justice: challenging Scalia on his own terms, and changing the terms of debate for the entire Court. (See "The Next Justice," TNR, April 12, 1992.) Even before he issued the same un-Shermanesque disclaimers about the Court that he had indulged about the presidency, his candidacy raised a series of doubts. With his hypercombativeness, hard-headed pragmatism, legalistic intelligence and lack of overriding vision, ironically, Cuomo might still become a justice, and in the manner of Byron White. More eloquent, warmhearted, charismatic and liberal, presumably, but another lonely realist in the end. •

Cohesion vs. combat effectiveness.

ONLY CONNECT?

By Gerald J. Garvey and John J. DiIulio Jr.

In the hearings on Capitol Hill and in the debate around the country, the case against allowing gays to serve openly in the military has come down to a core argument: that homosexuals who are allowed to brace, shower and generally soldier alongside straight comrades-in-arms will undermine unit cohesion and therefore harm fighting effectiveness. What this argument assumes is that a clear connection exists between "cohesion" and "combat effectiveness." Unfortunately there isn't one. The empirical evidence for the link is completely inconclusive.

In the Senate hearings, three meanings of unit cohesion have already been conflated. But in our view, they are quite distinct. Unit cohesion evokes, first, the relationship between small-group integrity and combat performance; second, a military philosophy about the kind of training that best prepares recruits for combat challenges; and third, assumptions about day-to-day unit discipline, particularly in the noncombat circumstances that are the norm.

Like most Americans watching the Senate hearings, we are noncombatants—neither gay nor presently in the military. One of us (DiIulio) favors a repeal of the

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ban; the other (Garvey) opposes a repeal. We do not, in the end, see much chance to find a middle ground. But we think it's possible to get a better understanding of how unit cohesion figures in the military's position.

In its first formulation, unit cohesion is all about morale, esprit de corps, motivation and the will to fight. Soldiers fight for their pals, not for God, country or principle. They fight for the good opinion of their peers, to avoid the primary-group shame or embarrassment that failing to act under pressure might bring or to avenge the death of a fallen buddy. Thus, soldiers fight hardest, longest and best when they belong to cohesive units. As J. C. T. Downey wrote in a 1977 study, "An armed force is a body of men organized to achieve its ends irresistibly by coordinated action. Cohesion is therefore the essence of its being." And in the words of a 1978 study by Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, cohesion is what enables a military unit "to perform its assigned orders and mission irrespective of the situation and its attendant risks."

Books and movies can help the layperson appreciate the acute mental and physical deprivations of combat, but not even the most artful or graphic depictions can substitute for lived experiences. There are many ways in practice to internalize combat goals: inspired leadership; resocialization through boot camp and in-service training; prayers before battle; medals; heroes' funerals (remember Pericles' famous oration?). Then too, there are ways to coerce soldiers into doing what they're ordered to do: confinement to base; withdrawal of furlough privileges; imprisonment or execution of deserters; firing at retreating troops. All military organizations, past and present, have relied on some mix of inducements and coercive instruments.

In their 1991 study of ancient armies, Richard A. Gabriel and Karen Metz found more continuity than change in the history of warfare. The psychology of combat in the Peloponnesian Wars resembled more closely that in the Seven Years' War more than two millennia later than it did the psychology of the modern military era. But in the next 200 years, technology fundamentally changed the nature of warfare, making what William D. Henderson in a 1985 study termed "the human element in combat" more, not less, vital. As Frederick J. Manning and David H. Marlowe argued in 1990:

> The heavy casualties among the assault troops during World War I made it painfully clear ... that modern weapons had rendered obsolete the formations and tactics that had sustained soldiers and armies for 2,000 years or more.... The phalanx, square and line could not survive the accuracy of cannon fire, rifled barrels and the machine gun. The resulting emphasis on smaller, more independent, maneuverable units, culminating in today's fire teams of three or four soldiers, gave increasing importance to these units as goads, guides and supports for soldier performance in combat.

Post-World War I and II studies focusing mainly on the British, American and German experiences have been read as reinforcing the current conventional wisdom about conventional warfare—namely, that combat performance depends crucially on unit cohesion. These studies, however, simply don't prove what their exponents claim they do. Indeed, many of the texts in this literature would merit a twist on Mark Twain's definition of a classic: much praised but generally misread.

One of the most widely cited studies is the 1948 article by Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz, "Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II." Their findings—published not in a military affairs journal but in *Public Opinion Quarterly*—are more complicated and tentative than many subsequent references suggest. Essentially, Shils and Janowitz found that Wehrmacht soldiers were committed to their military mission in proportion to their officers' dedication and political orientation. In units where both (a) the officers were Nazis and (b) the troops included the officers in their informal relations, the troops were more highly committed to combat goals than otherwise comparable units where neither (a) nor (b) obtained. Alas, these eminent and influential sociologists provided no systematic evidence to show that units in which troops were highly committed to combat goals actually outperformed otherwise comparable units where such commitment was less pronounced.

Likewise, the famous 1949 study *The American Soldier* reported the results of survey research conducted during World War II by Samuel Stouffer and others. The data in these volumes clearly show that cohesion was a byproduct of primary-group relations, and that it mattered to how soldiers defined their missions. But it did not even begin to show that, ceteris paribus, more cohesive units outperform less cohesive ones in actual combat engagements.

The same can be said more pointedly for S.L.A. Marshall's enormously influential 1947 book *Men Against Fire*. Marshall counted among "the simplest truths of war that the thing which enables an infantry soldier to keep going with his weapon is the near presence or the presumed presence of a comrade." This dictum by Marshall quickly achieved sacred status among military experts. It continues to be quoted authoritatively today. But Marshall offered no systematic evidence that the propensity of soldiers to fire (or otherwise fight) varied directly with the cohesiveness of their units. (And his much-cited finding that only 25 percent of soldiers ever fired their weapons in the typical World War II combat engagement has now been challenged as based on fudged or faked data.) Whatever, he proved nothing except that primary-group relations mattered greatly to soldiers in combat—but not that soldiers to whom it mattered greatly actually fought better.

Manning and Marlowe pointed out that "U.S. troops [in Korea] fought well, despite the introduction of an individual rotation system which, though well-intentioned, did much to undermine the sustaining power of group identification." It's unclear what formed the basis of their notion of "sustaining power." They also could have noted that some of the most highly decorated combat units in Korea were recently

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desegregated ones. There is no evidence that these units were more cohesive than otherwise comparable (and racially less diverse) units that didn't achieve distinction in battle.

For a while it seemed as if the military itself doubted the efficacy of cohesion and the importance of the human factors. America's postwar military posture developed a high-technology base, indeed depended upon it for our comparative advantage over the Soviets and the Chinese, who could mobilize "hordes" of conscripts. All our nation's high-tech forces needed, it was argued, were sophisticated managers, an elaborate R&D base and a ramifying procurement system, not buddies in the foxhole.

The most influential attack on this developing idea of the military came from James Fallows, who offered a defense of the unit cohesion thesis in his best-selling *National Defense* (1981). Fallows argued that the costs and complexity of high-tech weaponry made for budgetary prodigality, maintenance snafus, ruinous equipment breakdowns and man-machine systems loaded with "feedback loops" and "critical paths." By downgrading old-fashioned unit cohesion, the military had lost its way. Many in the military's labor-intensive branches such as special forces and infantry resonated to Fallows's call for a return to leadership, esprit and cohesion. But many in the Air Force dismissed his call. They knew that better avionics, not Homeric *aidos*, wins dog fights.

Shortly after the Fallows book appeared, Martin Van Creveld backed him up by comparing the "fighting power" of the U.S. and German armies during World War II. Titled *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939-1945*, Van Creveld argued that the typical soldier on either side fought "for the reasons that men have always fought: because he felt himself a member of a well-integrated, well-led team...."

But even in Van Creveld's work, there is rich enough historical detail to support alternative hypotheses that emphasize weaponry, leadership, even the bounce of chance, in the German and U.S. armies. At most he teased out what was implicit in Fallows's thesis: that unit cohesion is no more than one of several variables in the equation of an effective fighting force. Likewise, Henderson's 1985 book comparing the Israeli, North Vietnamese, Soviet and U.S. armies used a simple check-list methodology—a sort of multivariate regression analysis by hand—to rank U.S. units well below their North Vietnamese counterparts in terms of cohesiveness. Henderson, who testified in Senator Sam Nunn's hearings, concluded that the "organization and practices within the Army deny the U.S. soldier the degree of social support from his fellow soldiers provided in other armies and necessary to build cohesive units."

But as our military leaders have been right to remind us, American forces bested the North Vietnamese in every major combat engagement, including the Tet Offensive. Moreover, if the cohesion-combat theory holds, one might have predicted that in caught-off-guard engagements such as the Tet Offensive, combat units that were pasted together at the last minute would perform less well than units that had trained together, gone "in country" together and had previously faced fire together. Yet there's no systematic evidence that they did. In a 1987 study T.N. Dupuy, the dean of social scientific military analysts, said he knew "of no systematic effort to understand" the effect of morale and other factors relevant to cohesion on combat performance. His own work, which consists of efforts to "identify and quantify the effects of behavioral considerations on military performance and battle outcomes," is no exception.

What, then, of the second meaning of unit cohesion, which evokes tested doctrines within the U.S. military about the kind of training that best prepares recruits for the combat challenges they may eventually have to face? Here the point is not that cohesion and military effectiveness are linked, but that cohesion and basic training (and therefore combat effectiveness) are. Cohesion, as a requirement of effective training, may be less relevant *in* combat, but it is critical to ready individuals *for* combat.

The behavior of soldiers under stress depends on habits they have developed in training. Boot camp is bayonet drill till the arms almost fall off. It's two-mile jogs with rifles at high port. It's "courage tests" in which recruits master challenges not even imagined in their prior civilian experiences. Many will recall—indeed, will never forget—the terror of the leap from the crow's nest of a telephone pole to what appears a too-distant breeches buoy; the reward isn't the trip down the guy wire to safety, it's the approval of the group, a unit that sets standards, shouts encouragement—and, yes, threatens ostracism to the non-performer.

The cohesion-combat theory, then, might be superseded by the cohesion-training theory as a "rational basis" for maintaining a gay ban. But supporters of it are also skating on empirical thin ice. For one thing, as several studies have suggested, the military has only multiple, vague and contradictory ways of measuring combat readiness, and so would be in no position to prove the case. For another, the military's eclectic battery of personnel measurements and leadership potential evaluations bear little—if any—clear connection to its professed views of what matters in combat. Many of the measurements are purely academic; many others test individual skills that seem more relevant to the pre-World War II military. As Henderson concluded in a 1990 study, the poor state of many Army units is a direct result of irrational "manpower, personnel and training (MPT) organization and practices." Likewise, in a 1989 volume on military personnel measures, Robert Vintner and John Joyner noted correctly that the "absence of combat-related activity in the peacetime military" makes "it difficult to define a criterion of acceptable performance even for a (combat) simulation." In any case, it's hard to suppose that a controlled study of gay versus straight performance on the mili-

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tary's objective training measures would settle the case for or against lifting the ban.

But because the effect of unit cohesion in the training process influences military discipline and esprit more generally, the second sense of unit cohesion transforms imperceptibly into the third, the one that is centered on military leaders' assumptions about the requirements of *non*-combat unit order. Concerns about the impact of openly gay soldiers, sailors and airmen on day-to-day order and discipline are in the forefront of these leaders' thinking. And they are the most plausible concerns involved.

The most difficult day-to-day problems will be diffuse, subtle, often unreported and perhaps pervasive. The argument that there are, and always have been, gays in uniform is no doubt true. But today's uniformed gays are a self-selected bunch, and they have self-selected with foreknowledge of the ban on open declarations of homosexuality or conspicuous engagement in homosexual lives. (Undoubtedly, self-selection has also skewed the population of individuals who have chosen to remain both in the closet and in service.) Throughout the force structure, soldiers are already wondering how they'll handle a bonding process that full gay participation in units may make problematic in the mind, even if never in the event. They're wondering how to react to feared homosexual propositions from peers, let alone from superiors. After all, it's not the Uniform Code of Military Justice that maintains day-to-day discipline and morale; it's cohesion.

The military is characterized, too, by the kinds of internal social patterns—the scuttlebutt, the barracks bull sessions, constant interunit competition—that make for community when all is well, but amplify any trouble. Malcontents will appear in the services—cliques bent on sabotaging the integration of gays. Adjutants here and there will get what purport to be "mass resignations." Gay bashers in the ranks will cause special problems. Still, one suspects that in combat, everyone—gay or straight—will have his or her mind exactly where everyone else's is: on staying alive. If there is, alas, any "rational basis" for the military's fears about how repealing the ban would damage unit cohesion, those fears should be proved first in the barracks, second on the training grounds and last and least on the battlefield.

There is, of course, a response to our contention that the cohesion-combat nexus is unsubstantiated by systematic evidence: Who needs systematic evidence? Common sense, attitudinal surveys, combat diaries, literal war stories and the gut feelings and testimonials of experienced military people may be the only reliable way to penetrate the "fog of war." It's argued that social scientists or statisticians do not have the capacity to generalize beyond a limited threshold about such mysterious and complicated human endeavors. As a 1990 study by Charles A. Cotton put it:

> There is a danger inherent in the systematic analysis of commitment in military settings: we may find that our cherished assumptions are not grounded in fact, that commitment does not really matter or that it cannot be controlled. Analysis is a rational process, yet commitment and combat motivation may be irrational.

Gabriel and Savage suggest that in the military, "operating procedures and norms are 'arational' in that they come to be valued for themselves far more than for the contribution they make to the product." For the military, cohesion is not just a bare, lean instrument for achieving combat objectives. Rather, it is an intrinsic value, a mirror of military culture itself.

That is why rights-based arguments ring hollow to military leaders. In a 1975 book Martin Blumenson and Jane L. Stokesbury quoted General Dwight D. Eisenhower on the subject of relieving a combat leader. The question, asserted Eisenhower, is not one of "academic justice for the leader, it is of concern for the many and the objective of victory." In the present case, those willing to weigh "academic justice" for gays against the real or perceived requirements of unit cohesion are thereby beyond the military's cultural pale. By the same token, asserting that gays will be under the same code of military justice as straights cuts no mustard with most people in uniform. Culturally, the argument is tantamount to saying that gays will perform as well in combat as straights because both know the penalties for desertion.

The cohesion-combat theory is the military's first line of defense in this debate not because the systematic evidence for it is overwhelming, and not because any military leader really believes that a soldier has to be straight to shoot straight. Rather, it holds sway because many military leaders believe that the sexual orientation of gays, whatever their ideological bent, personal character or politics, makes them incapable of participating in the meaning of the military. That gays may be every bit as capable as straights of feeling non-sexual love for their foxhole pals and behaving accordingly in combat is irrelevant. By military cultural definition, a soldier can't be gay and be a part of all that is best or most cherished in military life and lore. In a 1986 study Arthur T. Hadley observed that those "inside the Other America of Defense, the 'military' and their families, live in separate enclaves, they shop at company stores, they speak a company language, they attend company schools, where they study policies alien to most of us," and they live by "an ethic markedly different from that in other parts of America."

Within that culture lies the military's real objection to lifting the gay ban: not that it will keep them from winning future battles, but that it will change the meaning of who they are. And that is an objection that is as powerful as it may be unpersuasive.

GERALD J. GARVEY, a former Air Force officer, is a professor of politics at Princeton University. JOHN J. DIIULIO JR., professor of politics and public affairs at Princeton, is researching a book about combat effectiveness.

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CLINCEST

By Jacob Weisberg

It is hard to think of another time when the relationship between press and president became so knotted as during the abortive nomination of Kimba Wood for attorney general. Wood's husband, Michael Kramer, is a political writer for *Time*, and in the course of the fiasco he wore many hats, and many at once. At various points, Kramer acted as a journalist covering the president, an adviser to the president (according to some), an adviser to his wife the prospective nominee, a White House source for reporters, a spokesman for the embattled near-nominee and finally as an apologist for his own tangled role in the affair.

Following this debacle, media critics wrung their hands over whether it would bias Kramer's future coverage. In fact, those dowsing for conflicts of interest would have done better to consider the past. Through the campaign and after, Kramer's coverage was soft; in one postelection piece he compared Clinton to Lincoln and FDR. When *Time* ran a story about "Why Voters Don't Trust Clinton," Kramer managed to convince his campaign pals he'd had nothing to do with it (though he was helping to direct the magazine's political coverage at the time). Later, Kramer may have crossed the line from observer to courtier. After interviewing Clinton for *Time*'s Man of the Year story, he told the president-elect that if he was looking for a female judge as attorney general, he should pick someone like Wood who had "management experience," according to a source close to Clinton. (Kramer says he doesn't recall what was said but that he never recommended his wife.) The next day Kramer golfed with Clinton in Little Rock. Clinton reportedly told aides afterward that Kramer had relentlessly talked up his wife. (Kramer calls this "total bullshit.")

In his column "The Political Interest," Kramer never declared his own when he piled on criticism of Zoe Baird's nomination. Then, when Clinton fastened on Kimba Wood as his next choice, Kramer reportedly leaked the information to fellow journalists, including his friends Al Hunt of *The Wall Street Journal* and Tim Russert of NBC, who both had the story early. (Kramer neither confirms nor denies this.) When Clinton decided not to pick Wood because she'd been economical with the truth about her own Zoe Baird problem, Kramer spoke anonymously to *The New York Times* on her behalf, blaming the mistake on the White House. Wood publicly denied the *Times* story. But the *Times*, bound by its pledge of confidentiality to Kramer, could not explain that Wood was contradicting her own husband! *The Washington Post* later reported Kramer as the source for the faulty first story, but Kramer would not acknowledge it, and still will not. His justification is that the *Times* broke its promise to protect his anonymity.

Call it Clincest. Kramer and Wood were both part of an extended society of aspiring Clintonites who at times seem less worried about distinguishing their precise roles than in being a part of the cultural-political phenomenon of the new Washington. Clincest is not just about the rise of conflicts of interest, as husbands, wives, friends and former classmates promote each other's careers and advance in tandem, socially and professionally. It's about the increasingly cozy relationships between press, law, academia and government that now mark the Clinton era. In fact, there's rarely been a time when the governing elites in so many fields were made up of such a tight, hermetic and incestuous clique.

Of course, the phenomenon of overlapping roles around an administration is nothing new. John F. Kennedy was legendary for his friendships with members of the Georgetown social set, including Ben Bradlee of the *Post*, and for importing a Harvard-Oxford mafia. Even under Ronald Reagan and George Bush, dynamic duos—Robert and Georgette Mosbacher, Dick and Lynn Cheney, John and Anne Dore McLaughlin, Ed and Sherrie Rollins—made a social mark. But the circles in and around the Clinton administration are far more inbred than any of these. And the fact that they are more meritocratic than any previous governing class only intensifies the problem. They think of themselves as entitled to power in a way their antecedents never did.

This change in the culture of Washington is in large measure generational. The Clinton cadres are almost entirely composed of privileged baby boomers, who, like Clinton, were youthful opponents of the Vietnam War but attended elite schools while their socioeconomic inferiors were fighting in it. Bush's Yale class was admitted largely on the basis of money, pedigree and

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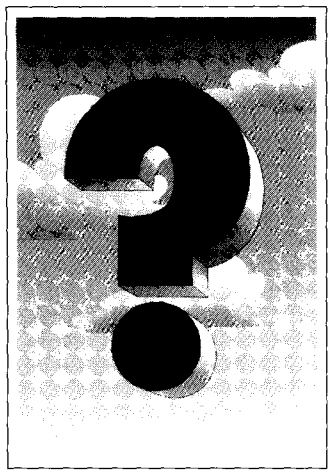

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connections. (Thanks to the Second World War, however, his generation's experience wasn't limited to this elite.) But by the time Bill and Hillary attended Yale Law School, the elite had become far more democratic, selected on merit rather than pedigree. Thus they, and members of their circle, feel few qualms about relying on connections formed through these institutions, and little impulse to look beyond them once diversity criteria are satisfied. The Clinton circle has a pronounced class consciousness that tells them they're not just lucky to be here. They're running things because they're the best.

The quintessential Clincest moment occurred in Hilton Head, South Carolina, at the most recent Renaissance Weekend, itself a Clincestuous orgy. It was when President-elect Clinton asked his old Oxford housemate Strobe Talbott if he wanted a job at the State Department while the two were jogging along the beach. The man who ran for president as a small-town Southerner with a common touch was here engaging in an act of classic cronyism, drawing upon an old school tie to deal with a new political issue—at a yuppie networking event that presents itself as an exercise in self-improvement. (Bush jogged too, but faster than Clinton, and without conflating friendship, fitness and social progress.)

But the Talbott story reached its apogee only last week at the Forest Summit in Oregon, when, according to Maureen Dowd in *The New York Times*, Talbott's misty-eyed swearing-in took place. In Portland's Benson Hotel, Labor Secretary Robert Reich (Rhodes scholar, '68, University College) presided over the oath given by Bill Clinton (Rhodes scholar, '68, University College) to Talbott (Rhodes scholar '68, Magdalen College). "It was a really beautiful moment," commented George Stephanopoulos (Rhodes scholar, '82, Balliol College).

Another shade of Talbottian Clincest came out when Strobe's wife, Brooke Shearer, who helped Hillary Rodham Clinton in the campaign, spoke on "The Hillary Factor" at a seminar on "How the Presidential Race Was Won." She was subsequently appointed to head the White House Fellows Program. It got deeper still when Brooke's brother Derek, an economic adviser and longtime Friend-of-Bill's, was made a deputy undersecretary at the Commerce Department. Derek Shearer is much more powerful than his title would suggest, thanks to what he told *The Wall Street Journal* was the president's style of "liberation management." The liberation Clinton feels is to rely on his pals rather than those with important titles. A third brother, Cody Shearer, is also a Clincest victim, having spent much of the campaign hyping the story of Brett Kimberlin, an Indiana prison inmate who claims he sold drugs to Dan Quayle.

According to newspaper reports, the Renaissance Weekend was invented when its founder, Phil Lader (nominated deputy director for management at the Office of Management and Budget), was sitting around with his wife and another power couple, and someone piped up: "Wouldn't it be great to have an occasion to really share some of your innermost thoughts with some very accomplished people?" People who answer yes to that question are now far more in evidence in Washington these days. Combine that with the fact that the president-elect and his family were to spend several days of semileisure time there for the eighth consecutive year, and the hunger to be part of the event became palpable, and its size increased, perforce, from 500 to 1,500. Those lucky enough to finagle spots on the guest list sat through largely tedious seminars on topics ranging from "New Technologies: Personal Implications for the 21st Century" (Program #12) to "How to Run for Congress" (Program #28) to "Building an Inner Life" (Program #207), participated in fun-runs and beach walks and went to a New Year's Eve party run by "facilitators." Howard Fineman, a correspondent for *Newsweek*, was only one of many journalists who lobbied for, and received, a last-minute invitation.

Invited journalists were only allowed to attend on the condition that they not write about the event. But that hardly mattered since they were going as "players," not reporters. And play they did. As Howard Kurtz of the *Post* reported, Fineman and his wife, Amy Nathan, a lawyer-lobbyist, importuned Clinton to put daughter Chelsea in Sidwell Friends Academy, where their own little girl attends power-kindergarten. The Finemans got in some serious face time with Clinton at a "get-acquainted party" for freshmen at which Clinton fraternized until the wee hours. No flagrant conflict of interest that. But now, whenever Fineman sees either of the Clintons, he can approach not just as a reporter asking questions, but as a fellow member of the Sidwell community.

Sidwell, where Chelsea recently took her dad's economic program to school—on a computer disk given her by his deputy undersecretary of commerce—is filled with power kids, including those of Hillary Rodham Clinton's mentor Marian Wright Edelman and her husband, Peter Edelman (who worked on the Justice Department transition and is in line for a job there, or HHS); Don Graham, the publisher of *The Washington Post*, and his wife, Mary (who live next door to the Edelmans in Cleveland Park); Bob Kaiser and Bob Woodward of the *Post*; and the grandchildren of Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, chairman of *The New York Times*. Having a kid there is almost as good as being an FOB or an FOH. Thus it is not entirely surprising that the Clintons' choice was avidly endorsed by various T.V. journalists whose own kids go to or went to Sidwell: Mark Shields, Jim Lehrer, Judy Woodruff and her husband, Al Hunt (who dismissed the flap over Chelsea's schooling, saying the Clintons' decision was "simply a private matter").

Many of the other journalists who attended the Renaissance Weekend, according to the confidential roster, were also line-crossers, such as David Gergen of *U.S. News and World Report* and the "MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour," who was mentioned for the directorship of the U.S. Information Agency before it went to Joe Duffy

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(who is married to lobbyist Anne Wexler, who employs former Clinton spokeswoman Betsy Wright). Another was Walter Isaacson of *Time*, who was interviewed by Clinton for his Rhodes scholarship, and Joe Klein of *Newsweek*, who is close to a number of Clintonites of the Democratic Leadership Council strain. Also present, according to the roster, were Michael Barone of *U.S. News*, James Adams of the London *Sunday Times*, David Arnold of the *Boston Globe*, Jill Abramson of *The Wall Street Journal*, Wolf Blitzer of CNN and Mike Elliott of the *Economist*. At a panel on the media's role in the election, many of these referred to the president-elect as "Bill."

Also much in evidence were the media power-couples; those journalists married to sources or other journalists. The former category includes Rita Braver of CBS, whose husband, Bob Barnett, played George Bush in Clinton's practice debates. The latter includes *New York Times* columnist Les Gelb and his wife, Judith, a producer at "Nightline"; columnist Jim Hoagland and his wife, the author Elizabeth Becker; and Clay Felker, the former editor of *New York*, and his wife, Gail Sheehy, of *Vanity Fair*. These couples quadrupled with power-couples like Ira Magaziner of health policy fame, who attended with his wife, Suzanne, a consultant, and a raft of little Magaziners; James Carville's partner Paul Begala and his wife, Diane Friday-Begala, who works for the cable T.V. association; Bruce Reed, who was a Rhodes scholar before he became assistant for domestic policy, along with his wife, Bonnie Lepart, who works for the Justice Department; David Ifshin, general counsel to the campaign, and his wife, Gail, an economist. Ifshin scored a major coup by playing golf against the president-elect. Clinton's first two choices for attorney general were there as well—appeals court judge Patricia Wald, who has also been mentioned for the Supreme Court, and Zoe Baird, with her husband, Paul Gewirtz, a professor at Yale Law.

Gewirtz was only one of many aspiring jurists making the scene at the weekend, also attended by liberal law professors Walter Dellinger of Duke (now at the White House counsel's office) and A.E. Dick Howard of the University of Virginia. But the lawyers, vying for slots as advisers and judges and for jobs at the Justice Department, were not so eager as the lobbyists trying to forge connections for their clients. These included Mike Berman, head of the Duberstein Group, a historically Republican firm trying to change its complexion; Lansing Lee, a lobbyist with Ron Brown's old firm, Patton Boggs & Blow, who is married to political fund-raiser Becky Robinson; and Chuck Manatt, of Manatt Phelps, a former chairman of the Democratic National Committee who was embarrassed when he was revealed trying to peddle the connections of his former partner Mickey Kantor, U.S. Trade Representative (FOH, married to Heidi Shulman, a former NBC reporter, who also worked on the campaign).

The Renaissance roster is an unintentionally hilarious document that accords smiley-face symbols to return guests, diamond symbols for past professional work, clubs for hobbies and associations and gives everyone's familiar name in parenthesis (Mike, Kit, Tony). Even more amusing are the biographies, drawn from information provided by the attendees, which meld career, family and athletic achievements. Immigration lawyer Marty Saenz let fellow attendees know she was named "Ultra-woman" by the National Association of Female Executives. Norman D. Berman boasted his induction into the "American Accounting Association Hall of Fame"; Alice Lancaster that she was a "Nat'l Finalist, Great Amer. Family Award"; Representative Dave McCurdy that he was one of "Ten Outstanding Young Men in America." All present seem to have won prizes for being all-around wonderful people. This is the ethos of an event where children as young as 6 sit on panels on such topics as "The Presidential Campaign: Our Generation's View" and attend sessions where grown-ups recommend their professions, like "senator" and "university president."

Others save valuable networking time by listing attributes one ordinarily would allow to emerge in the course of a developing friendship. Jim Coleman of Duke lists on his résumé "defended Ted Bundy." Clinton backer and Arkansas chicken king Don Tyson—whose company until recently was represented by Hillary Clinton's old law partner, now Justice Department Associate Attorney General Webster Hubbell—adopted Clintonite lingo in noting that he "grew his company from $5m to $4b; World-class big-game fisherman." Anne Grizzle notes not just that she was a social worker but a "Harlem social worker"; Sheryl Handler that she has been "working with Yo-Yo Ma & Maya Lin on Year 2000 Project" (whatever that is), "designing toys with Maya Lin"; Ralph Everett that he was "1st African-Amer. to serve as Chief Counsel & Staff Dir. of US Senate Committee." Sarah Hildebrand, a "homemaker, climbed Kilimanjaro"; Patsy Davis, also homemaker, "bungy-jumped off 150' NZ bridge" (New Zealand?).

Of course, many of those at the weekend shared links from other elite events and organizations—Oxford, Yale and Harvard for starters. Take Clinton's Rhodes scholarship friends—they include Talbott, Reich (who was also at Yale Law with the Clintons, and whose wife, Clare Dalton, worked for Hillary during the campaign), Labor Department solicitor Tom Williamson, Magaziner (who once wrote a book with Reich), Stephen A. Oxman, who has been nominated assistant secretary of state for European affairs, and Rick Stearns, a close Oxford friend, now a Massachusetts judge, who has recently been mentioned as the likely next head of the FBI. A dozen others, including University College alums John Isaacson and Douglas Eakeley (also a Yale roommate), worked on the campaign, transition or inauguration. Eakeley raised $100,000 from New Jersey for the campaign using Rhodes scholar and Yale Law School directories as his only guides. And the government is filled with more than two dozen other Oxonians, of whom the best

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known are James Woolsey, George Stephanopoulos, and Bruce Reed.

Alumni and professors of Yale Law School are almost as plentiful, including the solicitor general-designate, Drew Days, and Professor Burke Marshall, a close FOH, who has sent many of his students to Washington. Gewirtz was in line for a judicial appointment until his Peruvian problems intervened. During the campaign, Yale Law Graduates for Clinton raised an astounding $1.6 million, according to Bob Cohn of *Newsweek*. Nearly half came from Bill's and Hillary's classes, 1972 and 1973. Contributors were offered an inside track for delivering their résumés to the transition team's personnel office.

One would think they would be wary of the political liability of such credentials. But with an Arkansan good old boy who happens to be an instinctive populist as their leader, nobody seems very worried about it. Thus Clinton has already brought to his administration at least eight Harvard professors, including Reich, David Ellwood (Health and Human Services), Graham Allison of the Kennedy School (Defense) and Phillip Heymann of the Law School (deputy attorney general)—something Dukakis never would have dared. The time is ripe for William F. Buckley to repeat his famous line about how he'd rather be governed by the first 100 names in the Cambridge phone book than the faculty of Harvard University.

The Harvard-Oxford circle of Reich and Magaziner has a heavy overlap with what my former colleague Sidney Blumenthal has called "The Conversation": a group of liberals who have long shared ideas about reinvigorating the Democratic Party. (See "The Anointed," TNR, February 3, 1992.) Clinton's earlier ideological neoliberalism seems to have fallen prey to the peer pressure of this better-connected group. The Democratic Leadership Council, which developed some of the ideas used by Clinton during the campaign, has been noticeably stiffed since the election in favor of the Clincest buddies. Of the DLC-Progressive Policy Institute crowd, only Reed and Bill Galston won subordinate positions in the domestic policy office. And they are under Carol Rasco, an FOB, who now reports to HRC. Rob Shapiro, Will Marshall and Al From have all remained on the outside, as have those who transgressed certain social proprieties. Elaine Kamarck, a *Newsday* columnist and likely candidate for many jobs, reportedly lost out because of a column she wrote suggesting Hillary take a back seat to her husband during the campaign. More recently, she has turned up as an informal assistant to Al Gore.

Blumenthal has yet to analyze, however, his own role in "The Conversation." Most of those quoted in his story are not just sources but long-standing personal friends. And he sees his advocacy journalism as an extension of that friendship. In this, he follows precisely the rules of Clincest. Rick Kaplan, executive producer of ABC's "Prime Time Live," played golf with Bill shortly before the inauguration and watched movies with both Clintons at the governor's mansion. Hunt, too, has tried to insinuate himself with the new in-crowd. Six weeks after the Kimba Wood screw-up, he was still brooding about his friend's not making the grade, calling her non-selection his "outrage of the week" on CNN's "Capitol Gang" on March 20.

THE NEW REPUBLIC, of course, is not immune. At the inauguration, the magazine threw a party for Gore, a Harvard student of editor-in-chief and chairman Marty Peretz. Peretz informally advised Gore during the campaign and was subsequently mentioned as a potential director of USIA, a job that went to Joe Duffy. Five of the top nine editors at THE NEW REPUBLIC attended Oxford, two as Rhodes scholars, myself included (New College, '87). And numerous Clintonites, including Shapiro, Reed, Reich, Gewirtz, Michael Waldman and Bruce Babbitt, have written for us. But at least we're an *opinion* magazine.

Perhaps most incredible of all is Taylor Branch, who worked with Clinton on George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign. Branch requested access as a journalist to the president on Inauguration Day for *Life*. He got it, but only on condition that he help write Clinton's inaugural address. Because Branch is a fine writer of real integrity, nobody frets much about this hybrid role. But objectively, it's much more dramatic than what George Will did for Ronald Reagan when he helped him prepare for a presidential debate in 1980. The only mitigating circumstance is that *Life* more or less explained Branch's dual role in an editors' introduction to his story. These journalists, it is worth pointing out, unlike their predecessors, are all approximately the same age as the Clintons. Thus access shades into identity.

As a result of the social connections between reporters and officialdom that transfuse the new administration, the inside defense has become a kind of journalistic subgenre in recent months. Kramer never declared himself the husband of Kimba Wood in his column, but others have been only too eager to point out their ties to the new crew. Thus Anthony Lewis in *The New York Times* of January 25: "I know Zoe Baird, and I think I understand why Bill Clinton chose her.... She is a wonderfully talented lawyer with the backbone to do the toughest jobs." Or Anna Quindlen in the *Times* of February 7: "I know Kimba Wood, which is my good fortune.... If I had to choose three words to describe her, they would be these: integrity, decency, intelligence." These pieces do little for the nominees but much for the pundit alleging a connection. In reality, the "friendships" often amount to little more than co-attendance at a few chichi dinner parties. It's hard to say which is worse—reporters who fail to disclose their potential conflicts of interest, or those constantly making self-aggrandizing disclaimers.

When the issue of Clinton's draft wiggling first came up, one could hardly make out the roles of his various defenders. The case for Clinton's integrity was made

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by former Oxford classmates, journalists, academics, friends and advisers—but mostly by people who fell into several of those categories, and some who fell into all of them. Talbott wrote one of these exculpations in the April 6 *Time*. In making the case that Clinton had not tried to dodge the draft, Talbott selectively quoted a letter given him by Rick Stearns (see above), which substantiates Clinton's agony. It was unavailable to non-Oxonian members of the press. Another such role-blurrer was Reich, who spun the Colonel Holmes letter for reporters. Yet another was Michael Mandelbaum, who knew the Clinton clique when he was at Cambridge on a Marshall and they were at Oxford on Rhodeses. Mandelbaum, who wrote a book with Talbott in 1987, was offered the Office of Policy Planning at the State Department but turned it down. For purposes of comparison, consider how many friends of George Bush's, from college or elsewhere, publicly defended the consistency of his statements about Iran-contra.

Another complicating factor was that several of those covering the campaign were Oxonians themselves, including David von Drehle and E.J. Dionne of the *Post*, both of whom tended to portray Clinton sympathetically. James Fallows, a Rhodes scholar and former Carter speechwriter who is a couple of years younger than Clinton, didn't cover the campaign intensively, but wrote another *Post* editorial defending him. Fallows, who is famous for an article he wrote in 1975 criticizing members of his Harvard class for not opposing the war by allowing themselves to be drafted, later expressed his surprise at being invited to the Economic Summit in Little Rock.

The summit was another grand Clincest event, at which advisers—like Reich, captains of industry—like John Sculley, the chairman of Apple Computers (who sat next to Hillary during Bill's address to Congress), academics—like economist Robert Solow of MIT, who recently boosted Clinton's economic plan in the *New York Review of Books*, journalists—like David Osborne, author of the administration's favorite book, *Reinventing Government*, and social activists—like Marian Wright Edelman participated without regard to status. They attended not so much as economists, businesspeople or (heaven forbid) reporters, but as FOBs and FOHs. This is particularly troublesome in the case of the academics, many of whom frequently testify before Congress as independent witnesses and who have developed strong personal investments in Clinton's proposals and Clinton's numbers.

As with the Renaissance Weekend, the roster of this event swelled, from 100 to 400, to accommodate those beating down the doors. The style of the seminar, too, owed much to the Renaissance Weekend. In a room too large and full for an actual discussion, attendees made serial presentations in which they registered their amazingly uniform views. And not surprisingly, there were a number of guests who were also at Renaissance, including Baird, Michael Porter of the Harvard Business School, trade lawyer Paula Stern, who was a near-miss for U.S. Trade Representative, and computer executive Sheryl Handler (the one who designs toys with Yo-Yo Ma and Maya Lin). Several attendees embarrassed themselves with praise for the man who made it all possible. "In conversations with a broad cross-section of the attendees, the word I heard again and again was 'astonishing,'" Robert Kuttner wrote in a report for the *Sacramento Bee*. "People were stunned at Clinton's range, grasp of detail, intuition and capacity to set a tone."

This amounts to a familiar kind of self-promotion, in which the speaker builds up himself and others at the same time. But the impact of Clincest is more than just a matter of an elite mutual admiration society. It's about the accountability of the governing classes. When many branches of power—executive, legal, academic, journalistic—come under the sway of a suffocatingly tight, meritocratic elite, there's a real danger of getting out of touch with the rest of America. Nannygate, when the Clintonisant classes failed to understand the importance of what they regarded as a peccadillo, is unlikely to remain the only scandal; and no amount of direct access television and town meeting after town meeting can compensate for the problem. Real populists, not least among them Ross Perot, must sense blood already swirling in the political water.

Meanwhile in Washington, the name-dropping continues. Partly because the Clintonites' belief in their own rectitude is so strong, they aren't inclined to hold back. Republicans are more prone to recognize personal ambition for what it is. Clintelligentsia, and Clinton himself, tend to confuse it with political reform.

Take FOH Marna Tucker. A highly paid divorce lawyer, Tucker is a past president of the D.C. Bar Association, and "mentioned" as potential president of the American Bar Association or a federal judge. She is close to Brooksley Born, another FOH lawyer at Arnold & Porter who was mentioned as a potential attorney general or solicitor general. At the Renaissance Weekend, Tucker's bio listed her as "one of DC's 100 most powerful women." On January 24, his first Sunday as president, Clinton called Tucker to compliment her on a favorable profile in *The Washington Post Magazine*. According to Al Kamen of the *Post*'s "Federal Page," Clinton joked about how she managed to get such good press and invited Tucker to stop by the Oval Office later that day.

"When she arrived, Clinton was hanging pictures with aides and arranging the office. He took her over to his desk, bare except for the magazine, and asked her to autograph it. He made another joke about the nearly 7,000-word article. Tucker asked if he really read the whole thing.

"I read every word," he said. "Here. Want to give me a quiz?"

Now how did Al Kamen learn all this detail about how impressed the new president was with his friend Marna Tucker? Hint: he didn't get it from Clinton. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Reviving, Revealing

The hero of **Born Yesterday** (Hollywood Pictures) is a writer for THE NEW REPUBLIC. This fact, noted in these pages two weeks ago, is unique in the world history of film. Therefore—or nonetheless—more points must be noted.

The film is based on Garson Kanin's play, a huge hit in 1946. Laurence Olivier thought it one of the best American plays and produced it in London, where, too, it was a hit. It was filmed in 1950 with George Cukor directing and with Judy Holliday playing the female lead, Billie Dawn. This was Holliday's second stroke of luck with the part.

The first stroke struck when the play began its out-of-town tryout tour prior to Broadway. Jean Arthur was Billie. Rumor reported that Arthur got cold feet; Holliday, who had done a small but comparable role the year before in a play called *Kiss Them for Me*, was summoned to replace her and was a smash. Within weeks, all Manhattan was imitating Holliday. Billie's second-act curtain line, addressed to her brutal boyfriend, is "Drop dead," which Holliday, in pure Brooklynese, rendered as (something like) "Dzrop dzead." No party, in those days, was complete without an imitation of the line.

Still, when Hollywood got around to filming the play, they went after Rita Hayworth to play Billie. Unsuccessful, they then went after Jean Parker, who had done the part in a touring company. When that, too, didn't work out, the studio big-brains settled for the woman who had already been acclaimed as Billie—and Holliday scored again.

Now the film has been remade with Melanie Griffith in the part. Billie comes to Washington with Harry Brock, her protector, a coarse, up-from-the-junkyard tycoon. He is there to do dirty deals with senators. Billie's ignorance embarrasses even Harry in Washington society, so he engages Paul Verrall of TNR to tutor her in current events. Tutoring progresses to the point where teacher and pupil fall in love; eventually she leaves Harry for Paul, thus leaving vice for virtue.

First, some economic comparisons. In Kanin's play, Harry's luxe Washington hotel suite costs (this is 1946) $235 a day and is considered prodigal; in the film it costs $6,500 a day. In the play Harry offers Paul $200 a week to tutor Billie; in the film it's $500 a day. In the play Harry mocks Paul for earning only $125 a week (a sum that, I heard, caused bitter hilarity amid the then TNR staff); in the film Paul's salary isn't mentioned.

Douglas McGrath's screenplay also modernizes the deal that Harry is trying to bring off. But two basic flaws simply couldn't be fixed. First, Billie herself is no longer a funny idea. Few would doubt that there are bird-brained beauties today who are well-paid concubines, but the subject simply isn't amusing anymore. It has become a matter, in a time more sensitized to feminist issues, to deplore, not to chuckle at.

Second, the play blends the Pygmalion story with a theme of democratic surge, Billie as representative of the bamboozled populace rising at last to challenge and overthrow its corrupt masters. This Norman Corwin–Henry A. Wallace idiom fit the immediate postwar atmosphere, but it wouldn't fit these more cynical times. McGrath has quite rightly eliminated almost all of it, but he hasn't replaced it with anything. The piece seems denuded.

For instance, at the very end of the play, after Billie and Paul walk out on Harry, his drunken, corrupt lawyer raises a glass to toast the pair and "all the dumb chumps and all the crazy broads ... who thirst for knowledge—and search for truth—who fight for justice." McGrath couldn't possibly retain that language; the film ends with the Billie-Paul exit. Plunk. It's like cutting off the blowzy coda of a piece of music. The ending may have been hoopla, but it was structurally useful. Something else was needed to keep the finish from fizzling.

Luis Mandoki, the director, succeeded and failed with his cast. He helped Griffith to her best performance, possibly because it's the role her tweety voice has long longed for; and he has induced Lajos Koltai to photograph her flatteringly. But Mandoki has allowed (encouraged?) John Goodman, as Brock, to overact so outrageously that it's hard to believe he is the same actor who was so subtle in *Barton Fink*.

Don Johnson is Paul, and is attractive, intelligent, courageous and witty, just like every TNR writer I've ever known.

Several books of interviews with cinematographers exist—e.g., *Masters of Light*

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Groundhog Day. *Pennsylvania. Bill Murray is good, surprise, in an amusing fantasy, surprise, about a weatherman trapped for dozens of days in one day. (Reviewed 3/15/93)* **The Last Days of Chez Nous.** *Australia. Lovely women surround Bruno Ganz in this generally successful ragout of family troubles. (3/29/93)* **Rich in Love.** *South Carolina. A gentle and intelligent sojourn with a man and two grown daughters, as they all discover themselves after the woman of the house takes off. Albert Finney heads—really heads—an endearing cast. (4/5/93)* **Stolen Children.** *Italy. An unsentimental, deeply moving account of an 11-year-old girl, prostituted by her mother, who is sent with her younger brother from Milan to a children's home in Sicily. A young policeman escorts them. Gianni Amelio directs compassionately. (3/22/93)* **—SK**

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by Dennis Schaefer and Larry Salvato (University of California, 1985)—which are valuable, but they cannot have what we most need: examples. Stills are insufficient in discussing cinematography.

Now the Film Forum in New York presents a ninety-minute documentary, **Visions of Light** (Kino), that contains interviews with twenty-six cinematographers and excerpts from 125 of their films. Interviews and excerpts are brief but generally pithy. Many of the cinematographers are foreign-born, such as Sven Nykvist and Vilmos Zsigmond, but all have worked extensively in America. (The film is dedicated to the late Nestor Almendros.)

I would have liked more specifics about lenses and f-stops—perhaps a few examples showing us the differences that different lenses make, and perhaps some outtakes compared with shots that were kept. But the directors, Arnold Glassman, Stuart Samuels and Todd McCarthy, the last of whom did the writing and interviewing, ranged their subjects well, and McCarthy asked good questions.

The windiest of the lot, almost predictably, is the artiest, Vittorio Storaro. More enlightening comments come from, among many others, William Fraker, Conrad Hall (admired by many of his colleagues) and Gordon Willis (ditto). Special attention is paid to John Alton, who flourished particularly in film noir, and hats are tipped to William Daniels, Garbo's favorite, who shot twenty of her pictures.

All the film excerpts are helpful, but the most striking is the one cited by Michael Ballhaus from his work on *Good-Fellas*. Robert De Niro and Ray Liotta are conversing in a booth in a diner, by a window. Ballhaus and Martin Scorsese, the director, wanted to make sure that the scene held; so Ballhaus pulled the camera back physically while the lens zoomed in. These contrary motions affected both the background glimpsed through the window and the faces of the men, thus adding a subliminal tease about what the scene portends.

Now let's have a documentary about editors. •

Robert Brustein on Theater

Akalaitis Axed

A musicalized version of Arthur Kopit's **Wings**, produced by the Goodman Theater in Chicago, opened recently at the Public Theater in New York. Although virtually all the other notices (including that of the *Times* Sunday reviewer) were enthusiastic, it got a predictably sour reception from Frank Rich, who called it "cerebral" and "intellectual." A few days later the Public's artistic director, JoAnne Akalaitis, was summarily dismissed, following only twenty months as Joe Papp's hand-picked successor. (Her replacement is the gifted George C. Wolfe.) The two events, if not exactly cause and effect, are symbolically related.

It does not take a conspiracy theorist to conclude that some role was played in this affair by the *Times*, which had conducted an unrelenting campaign against Akalaitis ever since her appointment was announced. But whatever the pressures on the board, the dismissal of Akalaitis was unusually brusque and humiliating. She was given a few days to clean up her desk and vacate the premises, behavior more appropriate to corporate raiders than to non-profit managements. Still, it cannot be said that the decision was unexpected. Ever since her brief tenure began, there had been rumors that Akalaitis's days were numbered, even that Papp himself had changed his mind before he died and had tried to replace her.

It is true that, for a number of reasons, Akalaitis was not well cast as the leader of a large multiplex institution. For one thing, she often intruded a forbidding political agenda into her classical deconstructions. For another, she was not overly diplomatic in a role requiring tact and mediation. For a third, she wasn't proving too successful at fund-raising. But these are ways of saying that Akalaitis is an artist rather than an administrator, and artists are notoriously single-minded and tunnel-visioned. (For that reason, the more entrepreneurial Wolfe may well prove an effective successor.) It is difficult enough to focus your energies on a single production, much less fill a number of other theater spaces with continuous activity over the course of a season. Papp's solution was to leave most directing assignments to protégés. Akalaitis chose to fill the smaller stages with one-

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person shows and stage almost all the major productions herself.

This probably hampered her administrative duties. It certainly left the perception that little was happening down on Lafayette Street, compared with the storied days of glory. I agreed with this criticism, but I must also admit that the glory days were something of a myth. Papp often left many of his stages dark, particularly in the first five months of each season, while incubating his spring projects. But although Akalaitis was learning on the job, developing a group of Artistic Associates who would surely have increased activity at the Public in time, the impression of comparative inertia was difficult to overcome. Worse, it attracted undue attention to the few things she produced, which subjected the Public to hit-flop criticism and focused a harsh spotlight on her own personality, instead of dispersing commentary over a number of people and projects.

Some subscribers complained that her choices were "grim." In a characteristic kick-the-corpse Sunday piece, Rich called these choices "academic"—"plays by writers on Akalaitis's short list of Drama 101 modernists" (meaning Brecht, Lorca, Beckett and Buechner, "the avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s"). Conveniently forgetting that he had regularly expressed a similar disdain for Papp's choices, and was particularly ferocious about his Shakespeare Marathon, Rich asserted that while this now infallible figure might have tolerated such "avant-garde" works as *Woyzeck* (1837), he "would have combined them with other, more substantial offerings, such as a diet of original new American plays and musicals, not to mention frequent mountings of Shakespeare." Actually, Akalaitis had herself directed the Public's *Cymbeline* and the two parts of *Henry IV* (as well as the Jacobean *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*), and was not only persisting with Shakespeare in the Park but planning her own production of *Henry VIII* this summer.

And no other projects in her two seasons were incompatible with traditional Public Theater fare. Anna Deavere Smith's powerful *Fires in the Mirror* originated at the Public under Akalaitis. And although Rich charged that Akalaitis became a co-sponsor of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* and Jose Rivera's *Marisol* "only after other theaters had developed them or given them their imprimatur," the fact is, as Alisa Solomon noted in a hard-hitting *Village Voice* piece, that Akalaitis had sponsored these plays from the beginning. Her scheduling problems were due to simple bad luck. She lost *Angels in America* when the Mark Taper decided to bring it directly to Broadway, and she lost *Marisol* only after the author elected to open it first in Hartford (no doubt to avoid premature death at the hands of New York reviewers).

The savagery of Rich's post-mortem (he even attacked the bookstore she set up in the lobby) is more than a personal vendetta. It can be better understood in the context of the New Aesthetic Populism, a condition threatening virtually every theater in the country and causing many similar artistic upheavals. The causes are social, political and economic, with pressures to compromise and conform coming from critics, audiences, foundations and the government alike. The result is that theaters these days are not being led so much as administered, the power of artistic directors having been transferred to managers and boards. "We have always been more comfortable with management structures ... than with the troublesome intangibles of the creative imagination," I wrote some years back, and the crisis has only deepened. The artistic result is a common centerpiece of *A Christmas Carol*, surrounded by critically sanctioned, recycled Broadway and off-Broadway hits.

This explains why so many second-generation artistic directors, following the death or retirement of strong-willed founding artists, have lost the capacity to hold a nervous board at bay (much less to disband it if it exceeds its powers). In the past few years these boards have fired a number of adventurous theater leaders, usually for failing to please the audience or to attract enough contributed income—not only Akalaitis at the Public but Liviu Cuilei at the Guthrie, Adrian Hall at the Dallas Theater Center and Anne Bogart at the Trinity Repertory Theater, among others. The fact that two of these are women (and that Carey Perloff, the new artistic director at the American Conservatory Theatre, may be in similar trouble) has raised cries of sexism that would seem to confirm Akalaitis's recurrent theatrical theme of female victimization. But the condition goes deeper. All of these were artists on the cutting edge in theaters grown more dependent on popular approval. None was given sufficient time to develop a policy or a following after early audience defections.

In short, our culture is still in the grip of Reagan-Bush conservatism, despite the recent change in administration, and a bottom-line mentality continues to rule our art. Instead of educating audience taste, once-independent theaters have now begun to follow it, and the visionary gleam is dimmed. Of course, there are sound financial reasons for cautious management, since the survival of an institution is a crucial goal. It is a goal second only to its survival as a creative force. For what profits a theater to gain the world and lose its own soul?

To me, the most disturbing thing about the New Aesthetic Populism is the alliance of mainstream critics like Rich with fiscally conscious board members and hit-happy consumers against the artists who provide the inspiration. Rich indicts the theater community for not ganging up on Akalaitis, and he indicts Akalaitis for criticizing the taste of her own subscribers (something the feisty Papp often did, too, especially at the Beaumont). He reserves his praise for the board, which should "be applauded for ending the misery with relative promptness."

I'm not questioning the Public Theater Board's decision, and I don't underestimate the difficulty of supporting controversial theater artists in a declining economy. I do question its callous procedures, and particularly what many perceive to be its buckling before critical intimidation. I once described a war on the arts from the left (political correctness), from the right (moral correctness) and from the center (aesthetic correctness). This is clearly an attack from the center. It is bad enough for one newspaper to control the destiny of commercial production, but when a powerful critic begins to arbitrate the conduct of non-profit institutions, then a shudder passes through the entire theater community. Who next will lose his job through *The New York Times*?

Frank Rich's insistence that the Public concentrate on more musicals like *A Chorus Line* and more new plays that might attract a wider audience exposes not only his inability to distinguish between the values of the commercial theater and non-profit structures but his continuing indifference to art with any depth or daring. Papp used a production like *A Chorus Line* as a means of supporting his more serious work, not as an end in itself. Rich apparently believes the resident theater to be valuable only as a breeding ground for Broadway or the latest yuppie fashions.

JoAnne Akalaitis will survive these indignities. In time, she'll even begin to enjoy the advantages of being a free artist with no institutional responsibilities. A more serious worry, under present conditions, is whether there will be many institutions remaining where free artists would want to work.

I've left precious little space for a review of the last production at the Public under her auspices, but it is a condition of the age that politics consumes the energies once reserved for art. Any-

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way, *Wings* is wonderful, though I should preface my review with the admission that Arthur Kopit's play, which began as a radio piece, was first produced at my theater in New Haven. Now it's at the Public on the very same stage we visited on tour in 1978, and I must admit the present version is an improvement. A musical about a stroke sounds about as appealing as a ballet about muscular dystrophy. But Kopit's work is not about disease so much as it is about language—the effort of an aphasiac to understand the function of words.

Kopit wrote this play after the death of his father from a similar affliction. His central character, however, is a woman, Emily Stilson (a Freudian might conclude that, though the author has lost a parent, he is *still* a *son*). Fiddling with the controls of her radio one morning, Emily falls to the ground in a faint, and the progress of the action is her long, slow recovery back to a state where language regulates thought. A former barnstormer and aerial acrobat, she thinks of her condition in aeronautical images—the stroke was an air crash and the hospital is a prison in Romania ("How it came to pass that I was captured?").

Emily is like an aging Alice caught in a Wonderland where she invents her own gibberish and absurdities. But the interesting thing about Kopit's work is how it turns prattle into poetry, much the same way Robert Wilson made poetry out of the autistic language of Christopher Knowles in his early work. What Emily remembers is how she "used to walk on wings," how she would "bank and soar and spin" and, finally, soon before her death, how she had an out-of-body flight, floating up to the ceiling.

The play is very moving, but the musical version is affecting in the extreme. Michael Maggio has devised an eloquently simple production with scenery and projections by Linda Buchanan, employing Foreman-like strings across the stage to essentialize entrapment and loss. Linda Stephens, though not quite as penetrating as Constance Cummings, who originated the role of Emily, is nevertheless a noble and commanding presence, and I also much admired Ora Jones as a nurse and Hollis Resnik as the therapist who helps Emily recapture lost time and lost words like "snow" and "tears." Although there are Sondheim influences, the music and lyrics by Jeffrey Lunden and Arthur Perlman are more indigenous to opera than to a musical—and the title song is guaranteed to exalt and enthrall you. Try to catch *Wings* before it closes. You may never see its like at the Public again. •

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The Shock of the View

BY JOSEPH LEO KOERNER

Perspective as Symbolic Form by Erwin Panofsky translated by Christopher S. Wood

(Zone Books, 196 pp., $22.95)

Perspective is again the rage. To discover oneself already positioned in time and space, to regard what one sees as the product of a viewpoint, to travel backward from appearances to the eye: these exercises are a contemporary way of life. Goethe, writing of the Renaissance artist's propensity for "working through all the conditions of the one thing one has discovered," had already remarked that in certain epochs perspective becomes "a sort of technical frenzy." A similar frenzy may be detected in the humanities today, where perspectivism takes many forms.

Most simply, it becomes the teacher's Delphic injunction to "challenge thy assumptions." More subtly, it engenders "reception history," according to which a work or a document of the past is interpreted less "as it actually was" and more along its sight-line to the present, that is, in terms of what later generations saw in it. And most dramatically, the revival of perspectivism informs all projects of "decentering," in which the objectivity of the individual, and indeed all ideologies of individualism and objectivity, are plotted as relative positions on the planes of history, class, race and gender. Even the theorist's perspectiveless view of all perspectives is itself perspectivized: "There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective knowing," wrote Nietzsche, "and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be."

Since the late 1960s perspectivism has helped to elevate methodological self-consciousness (which is hardly the same thing as a denial of objectivity) to the status of a discipline. The journals and the departments devoted to "method" and "theory" reflect a belief that the objects of traditional humanistic knowledge (history, the arts, literature) are not absolute, discrete realities, but conform to particular ways of knowing. To study any object, therefore, means first to study the conditions of study itself.

This inversion is hardly new to the university. It was a professor at Königsberg, now Kaliningrad, who legitimized the human sciences precisely by shifting attention from the contents of knowledge to knowledge's forms and structures. In the preface of 1787 to the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant pictured his own achievement in perspectival terms. To trace the intuition of objects back to the character of the faculty of intuition—to assert that the viewer constitutes the viewed—was akin to the "first thoughts" of that most epochal student of perspective, Copernicus: "Failing of satisfactory progress in explaining the movements of heaven on the supposition that the whole host of the heavenly bodies revolved around the spectator, [Copernicus] tried whether he might have better success if he made the spectator revolve and the heavenly bodies remain at rest."

One might say that Copernicus's account of planetary motion and Kant's account of the movements of thought were consequences of Renaissance art: the painters' "technical frenzy" for reflecting on the contingencies of viewpoint enabled the modern revolutions in science and philosophy. Yet the passion for perspective gripped the discipline of art history curiously late. In the 1970s academic interpretations of pictures were largely inarticulate about standpoint or procedure. Solid results mattered more than subtle methods. Explaining works of art often meant seeing them "in historical perspective," but neither the general object (art) nor the mode of inquiry (history) were thus perspectivized. Art history became instead a quiet haven where historians of literature, marginalized in departments that rejected history for criticism, could still talk shop with scholars who were not exercised by Saussure, Lévi-Strauss or Derrida.

This resistance to theory was sometimes attributed to art history's entanglement in the market: the paid custodians of great art maintain that greatness is an absolute quality that transcends any particular point of regard. Yet it was in the 1980s, during the great boom in the art market, that the rage for perspective finally hit mainstream art history. This belated modernization consisted not only in borrowing methods from more self-reflexive disciplines (such as literary criticism), but also in recovering methodological capital from within the history of art history itself. Rereading the founding fathers for their viewpoint rather than for their conclusions exposed the discipline's objects and methods to historical scrutiny. And, more comforting, it proved that this self-scrutiny, this perspectivism, was itself in fact traditional. The "new art history" could style itself as a reformation. The traditionalist's heroes, those mighty dead in whose university chairs the present graybeards appeared sadly dwarfed, turned out to have been as theoretically ambitious as the young champions of theory.

Nowhere is this core of theoretical speculation as brilliant, as influential and as complexly positioned as in the work of Erwin Panofsky, the mightiest of all art historical founders. His career, spanning six decades and two worlds, has become its own "symbolic form" through which art history discerned its standpoint. Panofsky was born a Jew in Germany in 1892. In Germany before 1933, he was a star of the competitive discipline of *Kunstwissenschaft,* the scholar best equipped to integrate positive scholarship into an all-embracing, spiritually relevant program. In his 20s he was made the first director of the art history department at the new University of Hamburg, and when, in 1927, Weimar Germany's most prestigious daily, the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung,* commissioned the country's leading scholars to write about the future of their fields, it was the young Panofsky who wrote the article on art history.

In Germany last year the Panofsky centennial was much celebrated, but behind this flurry of German reception lay shame and unhealed wounds: on April 7, 1933, all Jewish state employees in Germany were dismissed, and Panofsky was among those who were forced into exile. There was no protest by Germany's non-Jewish scholars. What preoccupies German scholars these days is Panofsky's withheld forgiveness, expressed, for example, on his only visit to postwar Germany, in 1967, when he made a point of delivering his two public lectures and his acceptance speech for Germany's highest order, the Pour Le Mérite, in English. Panofsky continues to remind German art history that its great figures were largely Jewish, and that it never recovered from 1933. It troubles the generation educated in this postwar

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wasteland, during Germany's so-called *Wiedergutmachung* (literally "making good again," as if that were possible), that Panofsky survived the Holocaust but refused to return and make German art history good again.

Even before his dismissal from Hamburg, Panofsky was a force in America's fledgling discipline of art history. By 1931 he was teaching every other term at New York University, and after 1933 he held lectureships there and at Princeton. In 1935 he joined Albert Einstein as one of the first permanent members of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, where he remained until his retirement in 1960. From this "exile into paradise," as he called it, Panofsky came to dominate American art history. His seventeen major books (including the famous monographs on Dürer, 1943; early Netherlandish painting, 1953; and Gothic architecture and scholasticism, 1957) and more than 150 scholarly articles revealed historical learning, interpretive scope, philological skill and rhetorical power unequaled in the discipline. His students called him "Pan": the master not only of "all" Western art history, but also the last avatar of European humanism's vanished ideal of an "all" of knowledge.

The source of Panofsky's enormous influence was that he spelled out how others not thus blessed could work away *as if* toward that All. Iconology, proposed as a method for studying Renaissance art in *Studies in Iconology* (1939), Panofsky's first book in English, soon came to be used as a universal hermeneutic of visual representation. It extracted meaning from an image by means of a sequence of operations. First, "preiconographical description" names the objects in a picture; then "iconographical analysis" identifies the picture's literary content, its story as conjured by the depicted objects; and finally "iconological interpretation" recovers the essential symbolical value the image had for the culture that made it.

In practice, of course, iconology always slips back into iconography, either by satisfying itself that literary content is the image's essential value or, more subtly, by writing a new story about the image's original culture in the form of a "historical context" that the image is said to "reflect." What made Panofsky's project so appealing was that it drafted a simple, learnable brief for the discipline—the search for texts and contexts—and ennobled all local efforts with the promise of a higher end. American art historians realized only late, after Panofsky's death in 1968, that this higher end had eluded them; iconology remained iconography, or else behaved, as Panofsky himself once fretted, "like astrology as opposed to astrography." By that time, however, Panofsky was being discovered by a younger generation interested not in his method but in its logic, and in assimilating it to a new master-method known as semiotics. Panofsky (so claimed one enthusiast in 1975) was the Saussure of art history, and iconology was a semiotics of the visual image, a full-fledged science that (in Saussure's words) "studies the role of signs as part of social life."

This revival of interest in Panofsky was owed in large measure to a return to Panofsky's early writings, from before 1933. The new American art history discerned in the young Panofsky a precursor as self-conscious and as difficult as the celebrated French literary theorists. And by far the most venerated of these texts was the long, dense, untranslated and baroquely footnoted essay "Perspective as Symbolic Form," which was published in 1927. That many of its champions could not read German only heightened its mystery and its prestige. Summaries, as in Michael Anne Holly's excellent *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History* (1984), and surreptitious cribs, as the one in the Warburg Library in London labeled "Unauthorized, undated, anonymous translation circulating in U.S. universities, 1975," ensured

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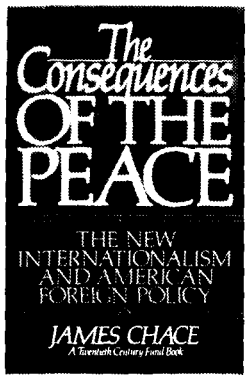

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that its argument was known.

Now, at last, Zone Books has published a handsome English edition of this seminal work. Christopher S. Wood's superb translation, which breaks up Panofsky's monster sentences and renders his language more concrete, is far more readable than the German original; and Dirk Obbink's translations of the Greek and Latin quotations make the essay legible to mortals. The publisher's cyberpunk name ("Zone") and current list (which includes Bataille, Blanchot, Foucault and Deleuze), together with the book's techno jacket design (a detail of a Renaissance fresco blown up to appear flat and fuzzy, like the video of a video), are themselves indications of one source of the contemporary enthusiasm for Panofsky: postmodernist theory, with its fascination with mediation, spectatorship and technologies of vision, and its love-hate relation to the Renaissance legacies of art, science, reason and abstraction. Reading Panofsky many decades later, one is struck by how well his *Perspective* already mapped these spaces.

Panofsky delivered his essay in 1924 as a lecture at the Warburg Library of Cultural Science in Hamburg, and to a great extent his argument was a product of that unique institution. Aby Warburg, art historian and heir to one of the great Jewish banking fortunes, conceived the library in 1904. Financing it himself, he dedicated it to the "afterlife of antiquity," which meant in effect the study of the permanent and the impermanent in Western culture. Warburg focused chiefly on the survival of pagan symbols in medieval and Renaissance art, but he also investigated more arcane topics such as astrology, popular festivals and the history of costume; and he pioneered a new kind of cultural history that was centered on, but not restricted to, visual images. For Warburg, the image possessed a quasi-magical power that escaped the purely formal analysis practiced by most art historians of his day. Analyzing that power meant recuperating, by means of interdisciplinary historical study, the meanings, the rituals and the socioeconomic arrangements in which the image was originally embedded.

Although Warburg published little, his method, as well as the library constructed to serve that method, exerted an enormous influence on the development of art history in Germany. Warburg shelved his 20,000-plus books in complex thematic constellations, creating what one famous user of the library, the polymath philosopher Ernst Cassirer, called a "labyrinth." To work in this Daedalian space meant drawing a thread through thought-paths laid down by Warburg. In contrast to the book maze, the library's reading and lecture room was rebuilt in 1926 as a perfect oval, probably in homage to Kepler, whose map of the elliptical orbit of Mars symbolized, for Warburg, "those powers which create space for thought." Warburg taught that Kepler, a true modern, was simultaneously a visionary abstractor of the cosmos and a true believer in astrology—and that modernity itself was the never-ending struggle between objectivity and subjectivity, reason and superstition. Warburg waged that struggle himself. During World War I he turned his library into a scientific archive of the true causes of the war; when Germany capitulated in 1918, he went mad, convinced that he had conjured the war god Mars through his scholarship on Renaissance paganism.

Placed in a sanatorium under the care of the famous theorist of sublimation Ludwig Binswanger, Warburg slowly recovered his sanity (or his perspective), helped along by collaging prints and photographs from his library in historically significant constellations. Released in 1923, he continued building his library into a great center of German-Jewish scholarship—a haven, as Walter Benjamin described it somewhat enviously, where "a type of seigniorial scholar, brilliantly inaugurated by Leibniz" and "unhampered by professional duties," moved freely with an aristocratic "disdain for the established disciplinary boundaries." The sanctuary was short-lived. In 1933, four years after Warburg's death and just eight months after Panofsky's dismissal, Warburg's library was moved permanently to London, a step ahead of the Nazi bookburners. Hamburg's art historical renaissance was over.

"Perspective as Symbolic Form," the only paper that Panofsky delivered in that magical space for rational thought, was given as part of a dazzling lecture series that included talks by Cassirer, the great medievalist Adolf Goldschmidt, the linguist Karl Vobler and the legendary philologist Ulrich von Wilamowitz. It is appropriate that he chose as his theme the rationalization of space. Linear perspective was modern painting's decisive achievement, the invention that made Renaissance art more than an "afterlife of antiquity." In the early fifteenth century European artists learned to imagine the picture plane as the cross-section of a visual pyramid extending from an apex at the eye to the visual scene. All lines perpendicular to this plane converge at one vanishing point at the horizon, and (as Panofsky put it) "equal dimensions diminish progressively as they recede in space, so that any portion of the picture is calculable from the preceding or following sequence." Thus constructed, the picture should appear, in Alberti's famous phrase, like "an open window" through which we view a space as if continuous with our own.

It is important to understand that this conception of the picture was an invention, something genuinely new; no pictures so composed exist in art before, or untouched by, the European Renaissance. This invention was also quintessentially modern, not only because it occurred at the dawn of our epoch and enabled further modern developments (like scientific cosmology and projective geometry), but also because it was symptomatic of what seems crucial to modernity: the abstraction of sense experience; reason's conquest of nature; the relativization of standpoint; and the development of method itself. And the study of perspective provides the study of Renaissance painting with a more urgent claim on our attention. By discovering the priority of art in the rise of modern consciousness, Panofsky claims for the discipline of art history a privileged perspective within the cultural sciences. Indeed, his essay finally works to place *itself* at perspective's historical focal point. This anamorphosis is one source of the essay's continuing fascination.

"Visible things," declared the young autodidact cosmologist Johann Heinrich Lambert at the opening of his earliest *Draft on Perspective* (1752), "often present themselves to our eyes in a very different form than they actually have." The art of perspective "leaves the true form behind and only endeavors to project the apparent form." Yet perspective can also be reversed, dismantling the illusions we are subject to because of our viewpoint. What Lambert calls "perspectival problems inverted" exercise a spatial imagination crucial to modern cosmology. To draw the heavens, we must locate our eye within a perspectival illusion given in advance. Copernicus revealed how our motion determines the solar system's appearance; Kepler mapped that movement; and Lambert and Thomas Wright positioned us in a universe by showing that the Milky Way was not an immobile blanket of stars fixed on heaven's sphere, but a lens-shaped aggregation that included us, and that merely appears flat and random from our viewpoint. Perspective centers us, in sum, only to reveal that there is nothing special about the center—indeed, that it is but one random point in an infinite universe. Thus Kepler, in the foreword to his *Optics* (1611), constructed models of the uni-

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verse as observed from Jupiter and from Mars.

It is from this decentering perspective that Panofsky rewrites the history of perspectival painting. Traditionally, art history regarded linear perspective as the definitive method for representing reality in two dimensions. The pictorial techniques inaugurated by Giotto, perfected by Masaccio and theorized by Alberti enabled painters to make images that seemed identical to the things they represented; and the steady progress toward this identity gave meaning to painting's history. Replicating nature, perspective was itself deemed to be natural, a sort of discovered civilizing resource, like petroleum or potatoes. Panofsky relinquishes this viewpoint from which Western painting's perspective appears to be the one true expression of the visible. Noting that the two preconditions of perspective—that we see with a single, immobile eye, and that the planar section of the visual pyramid replicates our optical image—are "bold abstractions," he argues that truth in painting is relative. Perspectival constructions are comprehensible "only for a quite specific, indeed specifically modern sense of space, or if you will, sense of world." The proper question to pose to pre-Renaissance and non-Western art is not whether it has perspective, but "which perspective" it has.

Panofsky's thesis continues to fuel a murky debate between realists, led by M.H. Pirenne and E.H. Gombrich, who argue that Renaissance perspectival images look true because they are true, acting upon the eye "in the same way as the actual scene" (Pirenne), and relativists like Nelson Goodman, who regard all images as arbitrary conventions that, like language, must be learned to be understood, and that resemble not the world but other images. And behind this controversy lies the old question of the legitimacy of the modern age: whether modernity's exemplary efforts are genuine achievements.

Panofsky puts quotation marks around Western "realism" and thus seems to agree with Goodman and with the semioticians, who regard images, like words, as culturally and historically constructed signs. Yet nowhere does he say that linear perspective is arbitrary or has no unique authority in interpreting the world. Relativists, according to Panofsky, are the Renaissance painter's modern epigones. To step outside one's world and behold it as only a picture, to reveal that what common sense calls natural, and what good taste calls great, are only the prejudices of an age: these are the exercises of perspective and the evidence of its continuing power. Panofsky's position on the truth of linear perspective, as well as his faith in enlightened progress through critique, are the enormous burdens of his essay's central term: symbolic form.

Panofsky borrowed the term from Cassirer, who in 1921 inaugurated the Warburg Library lecture series with "The Concept of Symbolic Form in the Structure of the Human Sciences." Cassirer disputed the positivists' claim that, in narrowing attention to facts and objects, they followed the natural scientists. Modern physics, like ancient metaphysics, advanced precisely by treating its facts—mass, motion, force and so on—not as the "things in themselves" but as "signs" mediating between the observer and the observed. If the human sciences were to follow this lead, they, too, had to shift attention from objects to methods, or, as Cassirer put it, from substantial thinking to functional thinking.

The idea that the humanities should answer the challenge of contemporary physics by reflecting on method recapitulated Kant's "Copernican revolution." Contrasting philosophy's skepticism with science's confidence, Kant proposed philosophy as the study of the conditions of that confidence, mapping what science knows back onto the motions of knowing. And Cassirer was, above all, a student of Kant. After studying under the neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen, he made his career by restaging, in as many guises as there are themes in Warburg's library, Kant's perspectival turn, clearing space by extending Kant's analytic of scientific knowledge to other modes of world-making, such as language, myth, religion and art.

These Cassirer called "symbolic forms," which he defined in the 1921 lecture as "every energy of mind through which intellectual meaning is attached to a concrete, material sign and becomes inwardly given to that sign." Symbolic forms are not signs for other things, or vehicles for more immediate experiences. They are what make knowledge and experience possible in the first place, in a middle ground between self and world. Thus Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1923-29), whose three thick volumes announce a comprehensiveness that must have seemed quaint even in its day, argues that all we ever know is the vast, mediating space of culture. Cassirer planned a fourth volume on art. That he never wrote it tells much about his whole project. The idea of signs irreducible to contents, of concretions of the mind in the object, had been the ideal of aesthetics and art criticism since the Enlightenment. What Goethe termed the "symbol," and contrasted to

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The New Criterion

A monthly review
edited by Hilton Kramer

In our April issue. . . .

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allegory's artificial relation to meaning, had roots in religion, for which an inaccessible God (like the "thing in itself") is present only in symbols. Cassirer's symbolic forms are already a sacramental aesthetics, far removed from the "arbitrary" signs of the semioticians.

At the Warburg Library, Cassirer called others to study the mediating terms between people and things. He invited not only applications of his means, but also new reflections on mediation itself within local art histories. Answering this call, Panofsky quoted Dürer, Germany's greatest artist, on perspective's structure: "The first is the eye that sees, the second is the object that's seen, the third is the distance between." Creating, picturing and abolishing distance, perspective itself may be art's most pure symbolic form.

Panofsky's ambition for an art history founded, like transcendental philosophy, on irreducibles was left unsaid, but it is obvious in his essay. If, as Kant argued, space and time are the two pure forms of sensuous intuition, and if space belongs to painting while time belongs to literature and music, then studying painting's changing methods for constructing space should yield a fundamental art history indeed. Here again Cassirer helps out, stating in the first volume of *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* that "the intuition of space ... most fully reveals this interpenetration of sensuous and spiritual expression."

Philosophy frames Panofsky's essay, but history gives it its plot. And the plot is Warburgian: modernity measured against antiquity, and explained through what connected them, that is, the Middle Ages. Ancient art, Panofsky tells us, has conventions for depicting space. Two hills may overlap as "near" and "far"; foreshortened tiled floors may recede from the foreground; pictures may even be framed as "views through" a colonnade. But the space cleared remains attached to objects as their attribute, rather than as an embracing unity, which was the achievement of the modern. True, modern perspective distorts the world in picturing it. Yet it does so in constant proportion relative to the eye. Modern pictorial space is not merely the volume of this or that substance; it is bodies and their total surroundings taken together as one continuous set. And Renaissance painting means first of all establishing this space: "The place exists prior to the bodies brought to the place and therefore must first be defined linearly," writes an Italian theorist around 1500.

Panofsky resists comparing ancient and modern painting as wrong and right. Each is a "symbolic form" adequate to a specific view of space and world. Thus antique art's incomplete illusions fit the "radically discontinuous" world of Democritus and Aristotle, and the "rational—that is, infinite, unchanging and homogeneous—space" of Renaissance perspective agrees with Descartes's *substance étendue*. Of course, pairing art and ideas as expressions of a "worldview" (Panofsky's term is already perspectivistic) risks reducing symbolic forms to a particular philosophical or ideological content. If Panofsky matches the shimmering surface of Byzantine mosaics to neo-Platonic light mysticism, his followers will say that neo-Platonism is what those mosaics *mean*. *Perspective as Symbolic Form* has, as Wood puts it in his preface, its "spectacular moments of irresponsible synthesis." Still, it avoids making ideas into the image's solution, and nowhere as brilliantly as in its answer to the historical question: How did modern perspective come about?

The Middle Ages are the cradle of historical perspective: in their seeming darkness, they compel enlightened thought to reason with the age of unreason by writing its history. Modern nostalgias for the Middle Ages dramatize historical consciousness by modeling themselves not on eternal Greece, but on cultures that they know are past. Panofsky's accounts of ancient and modern art are largely static synchronies of art and idea. Perspective's true history unfolds, rather, as the biography of form between antiquity and the Renaissance. "The art historical mission of the Middle Ages," begins Panofsky, "was to blend what was once a multiplicity of individual objects into a true unity." This happened in stages. Early Christian art flattened antique art's piecemeal spaces (landscapes and interiors) into patterns on the plane. Romanesque art further reduced bodies and space to surface, and created something new: the "solid and substantial unity" of surface itself. From now on bodies "cannot grow unless space grows with [them] at the same rate." Thus in cathedral sculpture, figures re-emerge from the wall, but always freeing the space that comprehends them; the high Gothic statue "cannot live without its baldachin."

Modern perspective arose when antique devices of illusionism (freeze-dried in Byzantine art) are unified within Gothic form. In Giotto's measurable cubes of space, bodies and the intervals between them fuse into one continuum. And this continuum no longer adheres to the wall or panel, but appears fully as a vista "through"—the baldachin opened, as it were, to the world. Renaissance perspective takes off from here, systematizing the vista through devices like the vanishing point and mathematically regular diminution. Alberti, Dürer and others eventually gave theoretical shape to these procedures, yet perspective's history occurs in solutions to problems specific to the painter's practice. Panofsky matches successive artistic styles with changing worldviews, but the worlds thus viewed are "a product of the artist's workshop."

This great reversal of images and ideas, where art creates the theories that will comprehend it, finally encompasses the art historian. According to Panofsky, Renaissance space, existing "prior to the bodies brought to the place," yields the Cartesian coordinate system and the space formalized "by Kantianism." And the logic of perspectivism demands that we complete Panofsky's historical sight-line, and observe that Renaissance space yields, via the neo-Kantianism of Cassirer, Panofsky's *Perspective as Symbolic Form*. This Copernican turn, disclosing the self as history's focal point, inverts all relations between object and method. It projects everything that Panofsky says about painting onto the discipline of art history. Perspective thus becomes the symbolic form of historical method. And perspective's history from antiquity to the modern age maps progress in the discipline: art history, like the spaces it studies, advances from a study of objects to a self-consciousness of method, or from substantial to functional thought. Doubling back upon itself, like Lambert's "inverted" perspectives, Panofsky's essay becomes at once a window on history and a mirror of self.

This extraordinary essay was published in *Lectures of the Warburg Library* in 1927, and in that year, in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*'s popular Sunday supplement, Panofsky prophesied the future of his discipline. *Kunstwissenschaft*, he predicted, would simultaneously expand its knowledge of objects and create a "universal method" for reconciling the artwork's eternal aesthetic value with its original historical cause. The debates about method portend not crisis, but progress. The grounds for Panofsky's optimism are founded in his essay on perspective. Method comes from the objects themselves, and so the historian of those objects is great art's rightful heir.

But Panofsky's prophecy proved false. In January 1934, about a year after Jewish academics were dismissed to create (as one Nazi official put it) "a calmed-down, homogenous bureaucracy built on achievements and specialized knowledge," the Nazi *Völkische Beobachter* de-

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nounced the last German publication of the Warburg Library. Warburg's "afterlife of antiquity," the review sneers, is an outpouring of "typical Jewish thought." "We don't want any more of this Jewish and emigrant 'science.'" It is nothing but "science about science." Reflection about method, traced by Cassirer and Panofsky back to the German Enlightenment, became a sign of the Jew, and was opposed to the German as the foreign was opposed to the native, the imitative to the original, the mediated to the unmediated, the degenerate to the healthy.

This was one of anti-Semitism's founding myths: the Jew as a wandering, parasitic, second-order being, who makes "science about science" exactly as his finance capital makes money of money. The totalitarians in Germany targeted the Warburg Library not only because its name symbolized Jewish banking and its forced exile symbolized Jewish wandering, or because the publication under review explicitly rejected histories based on "nativeness." They targeted it because the perspectivism on which it was founded—the legacy of German *and* Jewish liberalism—threatened their absolutist gaze.

Perspective as Symbolic Form is a dense and learned work that betrays little of the crises that framed it. Even the fact that modern painters rejected linear perspective gets displaced in Panofsky's essay to a late and disparaging footnote citing El Lissitzky on Futurist and Suprematist space. (Panofsky remained skeptical about modern art's break with the past, as when, in the letters section of *Art News* in the 1960s, he mocked the faulty Latin title of a painting by Barnett Newman.) And yet Panofsky's essay, despite the detachment of its perspective, or because of it, cannot help but betray the fact that the epoch of perspective had reached an end.

Indeed, the idea of "symbolic form" itself arose from the death of Renaissance space. Kant regarded space as an a priori condition of experience, because he believed the world really was structured in Euclidean geometry. The new geometries of modern physics and mathematics, however, revealed Euclid's space to be only one of many possible constructions. Cassirer's philosophy, which grew from his work on Einstein's theory of relativity, was an attempt to rescue Kant from his limited perspective on space. Modern physics, Cassirer admitted, demonstrates that we cannot picture the world as it really is; and yet the sum of our attempts, from Ptolemy to Copernicus to Einstein, proves that spatiality itself remains, in Kant's sense, a priori.

This higher perspective, approaching Einstein's ideal of the world seen (in Cassirer's words) "from the standpoint of no one," is achieved only when space, regarded in its total expression as symbolic form, is given a history. Panofsky writes this history as a story of art, and at its center he finds himself. Thus Panofsky's art history is, as he himself speculated, "like astrology" because it refuses to accept the truly modern perspective: that we are irrelevant to the world. Panofsky's art history is, in other words, a belated humanism. Nietzsche anticipated such a development. He wrote, in 1873, that by regarding "the highest evolution of man as the highest evolution of the world," the philosopher rediscovers man at the center after Copernicus had discovered the opposite.

By the time Panofsky delivered his lecture, a canonized martyr of the Russian church had reached precisely this standpoint. In *The Inverted Perspective*, written in 1920 and delivered at the Moscow Higher Artistic-Technical Workshops sometime before 1924, the mathematician, physicist, philosopher and Orthodox priest Pavel Florensky argued, just as Panofsky would, that linear perspective "is not a comprehensive understanding of the world," but "merely a schema, merely one interpretation of the world among others and tied to a very specific viewpoint," and that its seeming "truthfulness" is based not on "external correspondence," but on "its symbolical character." Panofsky celebrated perspective's relative achievements, but the anti-humanist Florensky denounced them as inimical to art and interpreted the triumph of perspective as a symptom of the egotism of modern man. Envisaging and condemning the historical sight-line that will define Panofsky, Florensky found his ideal in the "inverted perspective" of medieval icons, in which parallel lines are drawn diverging as they approach the horizon.

Like Panofsky's restoration of Renaissance humanism, Florensky's medievalism was conceived in a terrible context. In 1918, the first year of Lenin's war on the Orthodox Church, Florensky became secretary of a commission to oversee the forced transferral of sacred art into the state museums. His criticism of Renaissance perspective masks his witness to communism's "modernizing" measures, which were to demolish more than 99 percent of Russia's churches and murder large parts of its clergy. In 1933, the year of Panofsky's dismissal, Florensky was arrested. Five or six years later, in the gulag in Solovky, he starved to death.

Today Florensky's *The Inverted Perspective* reads like what the New Art History expects, but never quite gets, from

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Panofsky's *Perspective as Symbolic Form*: a full-scale criticism of Western realism as an arbitrary convention, written by someone with historical links to early semiotics. (Florensky was a friend of Khlebnikov, who was an influence on the young Roman Jakobson and the Tartu School of semiotics.) Here, even, are refutations of perspective's "truth," using mathematical set theory and anticipating a yet-unwritten New Age art history based on fractals. It is a measure of the West's hospitality to the Soviet canon of "modern" Russian thinkers that Florensky has neither been translated into English nor mentioned in the massive literature on perspective. And yet his vision perfectly complements Panofsky's; they are, together, the inverted perspectives of two victims of totalitarianism.

JOSEPH LEO KOERNER is professor of fine arts at Harvard University and the author most recently of *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (University of Chicago Press).

The Longest Migration

BY ALEJANDRO PORTES

Latinos: A Biography of the People
by Earl Shorris
(W. W. Norton, 520 pp., $25)

Mexican Americans: The Ambivalent Minority
by Peter Skerry
(Free Press, 445 pp., $27.95)

The Other Side: Fault-Lines, Guerrilla Saints, and the True Heart of Rock 'n' Roll
by Ruben Martinez
(Verso, 168 pp., $24.95)

Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father
by Richard Rodriguez
(Viking, 230 pp., $21)

First-generation immigrants seldom tell in print about their experiences. They are too busy surviving or striving toward whatever goal they set for themselves. The literary task is left to the second and third generations, who unfailingly produce a crop of writers who look homeward nostalgically to the motherland and describe the tribulations of the journey. Jewish American literature is probably the most prolific of this genre, but it has been followed recently by tales of other ethnic minorities surging in the wake of twentieth-century immigration. Italian-Americans, Chinese-Americans and Cuban-Americans, among others, have taken to recounting the story of their peoples invariably in subdued tones of pride.

For a good ethnic literature to emerge, it is usually necessary that the original immigration has come to an end. Though people may keep arriving from the home country, the initial migration episode and the circumstances that gave rise to it must be at some distance before, say, Amy Tan or Oscar Hijuelos begins refashioning it in haunting, evocative images. These writers experience their immigrant past as Americans. It is from this American vantage point that they are able to highlight for readers what is distinct and beautiful in the fading memory of the first arrivals.

Among sizable Latin-origin groups in the United States, only the Cubans are approaching this stage. People keep coming from the island, but the original elite exodus that followed Castro's takeover is long past. Its members created, as best they could, a replica of Havana in Miami, and then began dying there in great numbers. Their passing from the scene opened space for second-generation writers to begin reimagining the story. Mexican-Americans and Puerto Rican-Americans are at a different stage altogether. There are now third- and fourth-generation members of each minority, but no cultural gap, no historical hiatus, separates them from the newest arrivals. Mexican-Americans in particular are simultaneously the oldest Latin-origin group and the most recent.

Mexicans have been coming to the United States since the conclusion of the Mexican-American War in 1848. (Of course, for those who already lived in the vast conquered territories, the United States came to them.) The victorious North needed labor to build its railroads and its ranches, and it tapped the defeated South to provide it. Immigrants were coming from other countries as well, but these flows were soon stopped. Chinese immigration was halted by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the Japanese were barred shortly thereafter by the Gentlemen's Agreement. Italians, Slavs and Russian Jews still arrived on Ellis Island, but World War I and the Immigration Act of 1924 put an end to that. Then the second generation could grow up American in peace.

Meanwhile Mexicans continued to arrive. From time to time they were rounded up and repatriated, but shortly thereafter they were recruited again because of the need for their labor. For a century and a half, the reasons for coming to El Norte were always the same: dollar wages with which to buy peso dreams. Mexicans learned to *aguantar*, to endure, all sorts of humiliations in the North as the price of more secure futures in the villages back home.

Still, as with other large-scale migrations, a sediment remained behind, and these settled immigrants spawned second and third generations. For the writers who grew up as part of those generations, the problem was how to memorialize a past that was still their present. The faces of their ancestors were not confined to fading photographs, but crossed them everyday. This gives to Mexican-American literature an unsettled, tense quality: even the most acculturated Mexican-American writer faces the dilemma of straddling two languages and two cultures. Mexico cannot be portrayed as the distant land of picturesque forebears; it must be written up in the present, and for a writer in the North that is a heavy burden.

For this reason, Mexican-American literature generally lacks the glow of finality and the nostalgic solemnity of most ethnic retrospectives. Those settled traits

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are replaced by the blows of an uncertain present. Mexican-Americans write about their group in harsh terms. And outsiders see mainly "social problems" : the minority, now fashionably relabeled Latinos or Hispanics, becomes an object of public policy.

As an ethnic group, moreover, Latinos or Hispanics do not exist, at least not in the cohesive, self-aware sense that African Americans do. The label "Hispanic" was created by the Bureau of the Census in the early 1970s as a term of convenience for the diverse Spanish-speaking groups living in the country. But once Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians and others were brought under the same symbolic hat, Anglo writers set out to investigate what made this Census-created minority a people. The effort invariably bogged down in the absence of a common past, and in the different economics and politics of the groups so glibly aggregated.

If "Hispanic" means anything, it means "Mexican," since more than 60 percent of the population so labeled is of that origin. The next largest group, the mainland Puerto Ricans, represents no more than 15 percent of the total and the third largest, the Cubans, no more than 5 percent. In economic terms, the Hispanic population is so diverse as to prompt serious economic analysts to conclude that there is no justification to lump them in the same category. At about $40,000 per year, the Cuban average family income is almost at par with the national average; Puerto Rican family incomes are 40 percent lower, and the Puerto Rican unemployment rate doubles the national figure. Cubans get slightly higher economic returns on their education than the native-born; South Americans get about the same; Mexicans get less.

The immigration flows that created the "Hispanic" population originated overwhelmingly in Latin America, but this is a tenuous common denominator. For centuries, Colombians and Venezuelans, Peruvians and Ecuadoreans, Chileans and Argentineans have sharpened their national identity in repeated confrontations with each other. Upon arrival in the United States, they suddenly discover that they are all Hispanic. But the label does not dilute their strong national self-image; it simply creates a gulf between how people see themselves and their official designation. A parallel exists with the lumping together of such diverse groups as Vietnamese, Filipinos, Chinese and Indians under the label "Asian." These terms, so carelessly tossed about by government officials and the media, do symbolic violence to the groups so summarily aggregated and are naturally, and tenaciously, resisted.

Earl Shorris's book is a mixture of first-person testimonies, personal experiences, secondhand stories and reflections served up in a prose that is half-sociological, half-literary. I approached the book with skepticism, since the title, *Latinos*, announced another attempt to conjure up a common ethnicity where none exists. My skepticism was partly disarmed by Shorris's introduction, which essentially concedes the futility of the enterprise. In these first sentences, Shorris illustrates better than any potential critic why Latinos are not a single people. His Mexican-American interlocutor instructs him as to how to write the book: "Just tell them who we are and that we are not all alike." And what should she call herself?

> "Hispanic?" he asks.
> "Mejicano," she replies.
> "Hispano, Latino, Latin, Spanish, Spanish-speaking?"
> "Mejicano," she answers and laughs.

A Cuban, Dominican or Argentinean in the same situation would have replied in similar terms, and possibly with less forbearance.

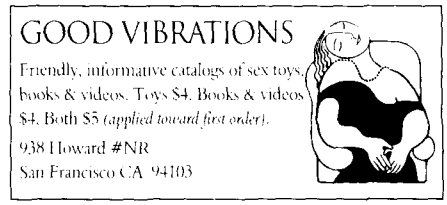
Given the unwieldiness of the pan-ethnic label, Shorris does the only possible thing, which is to break down the book into an implicit trilogy. Cubans, the aggressive refugees who took control of Miami, get about one-fourth of his text; Puerto Ricans, swept out of the mainstream and joining African Americans at the bottom of New York society, get another fourth; and Mexicans, the stolid majority, get the rest. That Shorris attempts no synthesis between these disparate ethnic tales is to his credit. Still, the task of rolling three books into one is not easy, and it forces him into an overly lengthy exposition.

The book's subtitle, "A Biography of the People," is doubly misleading, first, because there is no one "people" and, second, because this is not a biography but a multilayered profile. What we get is a collage of anecdotes, personal testimonies and observations that, by the second half, become increasingly repetitive. By the time we meet the heroic Cuban, Puerto Rican and Mexican teachers struggling against rapidly diminishing odds in the public schools, we pretty much know what to expect. But Shorris just writes on, his story now centering on Mexicans and becoming an unremitting tale of woe.

Still, Shorris is no tourist to the cultural worlds that he portrays. He brings to the task the knowledge of Mexican-American society gained while growing up half-Latino in El Paso. His fieldwork is diligent and thorough, and the result is that his conclusions are generally on target. Sociologists have known for some time about the uncomfortable facts that he narrates, but they have seldom discussed them in public for fear of appearing unscientific. These include the petty rivalries within each nationality: *mejicanos* versus Mexican-Americans, "old" Cubans versus new Mariel arrivals; the ways in which the downtrodden barrio in the South Bronx and elsewhere socializes newcomers into the culture of the underclass; and the value of "whiteness," introjected by predominantly mestizo groups who discriminate among themselves according to subtle differences of color. Shorris has no qualms about telling us of these realities, and the result is one of the richest accounts of the inner side of Cuban, Mexican and Puerto Rican life in America today.

Peter Skerry steps back in his book to focus on one Latin-American group from the outside. His study is not so much about Mexican-Americans as about the national political system and what it does to the aspirations of a minority. The book begins by giving expression to a concern often raised by native whites and seldom by Mexican-Americans: the fear of nationalistic separatism in the Southwest. Skerry cites the late Morris Janowitz, who argued that the refusal of Hispanics to shed their language and culture was the harbinger of future ethnic fragmentation. Although Skerry eventually rejects such fears, his decision to make them the introductory theme contrasts markedly with Mexican-American authors for whom separatism is a non-issue. American-born and raised Mexican-Americans never dream of rejoining Mexico. For them, the problem is that Mexico never ceases coming to them.

Skerry calls the Mexican-Americans "the ambivalent minority" because of their conflicting racial and ethnic self-definitions. He provides plenty of evidence of contradictory ethnic labeling but little analysis of the objective condi-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tions that underlie each stance. It is true that the group has alternated and vacillated between "Mexican," "Mexican-American," "U.S. Citizen of Mexican Descent," "Chicano," "Hispano," "Latino," "Cholo" and other labels, but these changing terms are grounded in the group's own protracted evolution. Not once does the author highlight the obvious point that the unsettled character of Mexican-American self-identities has to do with an unfinished history. Images of Mexican-American life are permeated by the natural ambivalence of a group comprising, simultaneously, fifth-generation Americans and day-before arrivals.

Skerry prefers to focus attention on the distortions that national politics, the media and the foundations have introduced into the path of this minority. It is these institutions that have turned Mexican-Americans and, more broadly, Hispanics into a race akin to blacks, when in fact their histories and present conditions are quite different. The argument comes close to Linda Chavez's strong attack on the rise of a new class of Hispanic politicians more interested in currying favor with Washington and the foundations than in representing their constituencies. The Ford Foundation and its creation, the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund (MALDEF), described as a coterie of ambitious lawyers without a constituency, come in for special raking. Liberals will jump to the defense. Yet caution is advised: this is no thoughtless tirade, but a well-documented and well-reasoned essay. Much of what Skerry has to say about the artificial creation of ethnicity in governmental bureaus and the growing rift between the situation of Spanish-speaking minorities and the images of them promoted by journalists and ethnic politicians is accurate.

In the end, however, he overstates his case. The unsettled identities and conflicting goals of Mexican-Americans may be influenced by the new politics of entitlement, but they are grounded in more profound historical processes. The emergence of a Chicano identity, for example, is not the result of sheer opportunism, but a reaction to a history of permanent subordination. Like the philanthropic elites that he blasts, Skerry's perspective is also too distant; he pays too much attention to Washington-style politics and too little to sociological realities on the ground.

During the 1980s 1.6 million Mexican immigrants were granted legal residence in the United States; 2.4 million applied for legalization of their unauthorized status; and a flow estimated at 100,000 to 200,000 per year continued to come surreptitiously. This massive legal and unauthorized migration, added to natural growth, led to a Mexican-origin population of 13.5 million in 1990, the nation's second-largest and fastest-growing minority. The socioeconomic statistics for this group are not encouraging. Only 5.4 percent are college graduates, a fourth of the national average. And, at $27,500, average Mexican annual family income amounts to just 66 percent of the U.S. figure. These and other indicators of collective disadvantage conceal, however, the significant progress made by many U.S.-born Mexican-Americans. Their collective achievements get buried in figures skewed by the continuously arriving mass of poor immigrants.

Continuing immigration also adds to the extraordinary diversity of the group. In his study of Mexican rural communities, Douglas Massey distinguishes four types—ranging from those where U.S.-bound migration is a rare event to those with half or more of their population already living in the United States and for which migration back and forth is a routine event. In a single California high school, another study identified at least five types of Mexican-origin students: from the recently arrived *mejicanos*, unstylishly dressed, respectful of their teachers and motivated, to the second- and third-generation *Cholos* who made a point of flaunting their contempt for the school and its staff.

Among immigrant families, some return to the sending communities, their economic goals fulfilled. Others make it into the American middle class, anglicizing their names and putting their children through college. Still others succumb to the perils of the inner city, their children certain to join the ranks of the underclass. The diversity and complexity of Mexican-American society is not captured by monochromatic accounts. Especially when, as in Skerry's case, the focus is mostly on politics at the national level.

Ruben Martinez is an *angeleño* journalist who knows about these realities. The collection of personal remembrances, poems and stories that he has assembled in *The Other Side* is representative of the dilemmas of writing about a past that is also the present. Of Salvadoran and Mexican extraction, Martinez tries to reconcile his diverse worlds through poetry, tales and hard-headed reporting. He succeeds best at the last genre. There are no great lyrics here, no profound interpretation of the roots of the Mexican-American drama. Instead he drags us mercilessly through the back alleys where this drama is lived and endured every day. Los Angeles, Tijuana and Mexico City are the settings.

Martinez narrates these realities meticulously, almost clinically. One detects a deep empathy with the pain of his subjects. For, like them, he is trying to live down the dilemma of being "North in the North, North in the South, and South in the North." The wave of immigration continuously redefines Mexican-American identities. American citizens of Mexican descent cannot easily shake the old country. Their professional and economic achievements are buried by a mass of immigrants who relegate the group to a permanent condition of poverty. And so it is that Martinez, a middle-class American by right, chooses to cast his lot with the impoverished kids of the barrio. He watches one of them cover a freeway exit with his trademark graffiti tag. The tags are numbered. The kid pauses before tag #2024: "Everybody takes the freeways.... Everybody, *everybody* and their mother sees this!" The need for recognition grows strong in a second generation forgotten in the barrio.

Unfortunately, the combination that makes this story successful does not travel well. The recollections of San Salvador at the beginning of the book are flat. And Martinez's impressions of the Cuban Revolution after a visit to the island are too scattered to make much sense. Like other left-wing intellectuals, he is rather mystified upon finding that many of his counterparts in Cuba are active opponents of the regime that he has learned to admire from afar. But let him loose in his own turf and magic follows. The "L.A. Journal" in nine separate vignettes, the story of graffiti artists seeking street recognition and the tale of how rock 'n' roll traveled and grew roots in Mexico City are all powerful pieces. *The Other Side* tells the Mexican-American story in jagged, raw images of everyday life.

North-South meditations are also at the heart of Richard Rodriguez's *Days of Obligation*. It is subtitled "An Argument with My Mexican Father," and the subtitle (with the book's handsome cover) suggests an extended dialogue between the immigrant and his acculturated offspring; but that is only partly true. The book is a disparate collection, from family reminiscences to a strong essay on homosexual life in the early days of AIDS in San Francisco. In between are reflections on the meaning of race in America and essays on cities, mostly in California. Like Martinez, Rodriguez is Mexican-American, and the attempt to make sense of the two conflicting cultural worlds is his ruling con-

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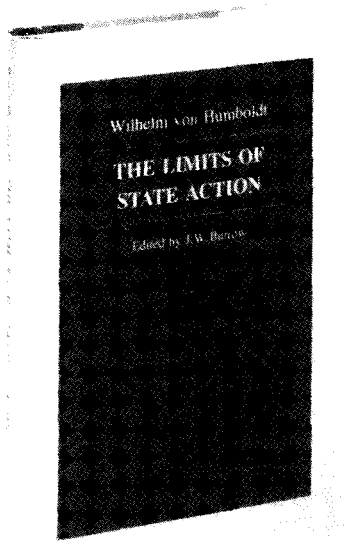

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cern. But sustained, careful description of events is not Rodriguez's strength. Instead, he tells us mainly about the architecture of his own mind as he straddles a world of disparate cultural, racial and sexual identities.

A poet, never a journalist, Rodriguez's extraordinary way with English yields a wealth of memorable images. He is not afraid to expose his own vulnerabilities, using himself rather than the outside as the object of clinical observation. "I used to stare at the Indian in the mirror. The wide nostrils, the thick lips ... no one in my family had a face as dark or as Indian as mine." The passage introduces a detailed self-exploration into the problem of living as an acculturated American inside a Mexican mestizo body. Poetic license rather than empirical investigation justifies his rather sweeping conclusions about everything. Mexico is "tragedy" in the introduction, the world's center of "modernity" twenty pages ahead and the epitome of the past ruling over the present two essays later. The same happens to California and, for that matter, to any subject prominent in Rodriguez's mind.

Mexican-Americans have a history unlike that of any other group in the United States today. They are simultaneously descendants of a conquered nation and participants in the longest-running migration to North America. They have been recruited for their labor, expelled and then recruited again. The West could not have been built without them, and yet they remain permanent foreigners. The home country beckons constantly from the other side of a nearby border. The tortured identities portrayed in Mexican-American literature are not casual posturing or the artifact of today's politics. For this drama to be put to rest, labor migration from Mexico must come to an end. But, as the failed 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act attests, the flow is too entrenched to be stopped by legislative measures alone. The needs of the migrants and the greed of their American employers have defeated every serious attempt at border control.

The only path left is rapid economic development of the sending country. As the experiences of Spain and Portugal attest, the identities and the socioeconomic profiles of countries of outmigration can change very rapidly when incorporated into the developed world. The new North American Free Trade Agreement holds some promise of nudging Mexico along this path. To the extent that it reduces the glaring disparities in wages and life conditions between both sides of the border, it will remove the basis for much tragedy and much anguish. President Carlos Salinas of Mexico sees the treaty as a way to help his country export goods rather than people. And indeed, after Mexicans helped build the North, it is perhaps time for the North to repay at least part of the favor: *that* will stop the migrant labor flow. And, like descendants of the European huddled masses passing through Ellis Island, American citizens of Mexican descent will then be able to look on their immigrant past as a stage in a complete and ultimately successful history.

ALEJANDRO PORTES teaches sociology at Johns Hopkins University and is a fellow at the Russell Sage Foundation.

Field Work

BY MARC ROBINSON

Ulverton by Adam Thorpe

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 390 pp., $23)

Adam Thorpe writes of tussocks and furze, of sarsens atop hummocks and coppices at the bottom of combes. When anxious, his creatures are "a-muck with fear"; those in despair are "husked of their souls." Life, as it is lived here, is "field-hedged and scullery-encompassed."

Ulverton is larded with this language of nature and work, as though Thorpe, an English poet, was determined to guard against undue metaphysics in his first novel. Speaking generously about certainties like the color of soil or the texture of crabgrass, he seems to be happily handling language rather than merely writing stories with it. Archaic words are sifted through new ones, then massed together to form clumps of observation. Rhythms of speech seem to correspond subtly with those of farm work, an artisan's labor or even the loping horses passing by. This meditative earthiness will be familiar to readers who know his two collections of poetry, *Mornings in the Baltic* and *Meeting Montaigne.* As he describes himself in an early poem, Thorpe is a writer "whose dreams [are] rural in an urban century."

By gathering the strange-sounding words and tuning his prose to their rolling cadences, Thorpe is also able to glimpse moments of his landscape's history. Ulverton is a fictional village in Wessex, geared to cycles of farming and so acutely sensitive to the consequences of time passing. What was once a "croft" evolves over the years into an untilled "lea," finally becoming a greedy developer's "plot"—and in the change in vocabulary one can measure shifts in attitude and speculate on the growing gulf between the ground and the people who tend it.

Ulverton charts such shifts over the course of more than three centuries. Beginning in 1650, the novel moves in large leaps, alighting every thirty years or so to take stock of the village's fortunes—what traditions have disappeared, what prejudices have taken root, what rumors and scandal are current. Occasionally Thorpe descends at expected moments of national history: after one of England's many labor uprisings around 1830; during the draft of 1914. More often, though, he sets his itinerary according to the village's private idea of value: the year a prominent farmer shocked the community by fathering an illegitimate child (1712), for instance, or the months during 1953 when Ulverton prepared a time capsule and buried it amid much civic hoopla. These events are at least equally important.

Thorpe's ample humanity also informs his choice of narrator. Declining omniscience, Thorpe delegates the task of telling Ulverton's story to its residents. The novel consists of different kinds of testimony in different styles, each bearing traces of the teller's particular bias, none presuming to be authoritative. The largest pleasures of these stories are aural; they derive from prose alive with the warm, throaty energy of speech. Sometimes a witness speaks with a wide audience in mind, and part of our interest is in observing the way that self-consciousness and self-regard interfere with reportage. At other times, it's clear that a speaker never intends a hearing larger than an intimate, or a group of friends, or just himself; as we read the love letters and diary entries, or listen in

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on a gassy tale in a bar, there's an uncomfortable sense of eavesdropping or of rooting through papers not meant for our eyes. This uneasiness about the reader's and writer's roles, which prevails throughout the novel, disrupts any creeping nostalgia and prevents unearned charm.

Perhaps it is Thorpe's awareness of how easily his novel could slip into miniseries sentimentality that keeps him digging deeper and staying with his subjects longer than would a writer merely *fascinated* with places and eager to cover territory. Thorpe isn't an easily distracted sort of traveler, and the considerable beauties of his prose owe nothing to any strenuously created "mood." He treats mood and other hallmarks of the picturesque as obstacles to be overcome. Far from enhancing his project, they threaten to blur its focus and numb his readers.

Instead, he writes with the hard-won earnestness of one who has waited for the thrilling first impressions of his village to subside—the sparkling dew to evaporate; the rosy sky to go back to standard English gray—and who knows that only then does his real work begin. A particular barn that sheltered an eighteenth-century tryst, for instance, or a ruined garden where someone else trespassed seems so unremarkable at first glance, their stories encrusted with layers of indifference, that Thorpe first must alter his reader's way of seeing before displaying what he has found there. Some chapters, it must be said, spend an unconscionably long time talking about seeding patterns and woodworking techniques. But for the most part, the chapters are leisurely in *Ulverton* for a reason: Thorpe is encouraging readers to settle into the prose and to wait as his writing delicately scrapes away at history, moving slowly into the past—a past that, when he's done, seems truly to have been lived, not merely passed through.

His archaeologist's temperament doesn't make Thorpe a cold writer. Such patience, in fact, only intensifies the disquiet that comes with any act of searching, when the object of the search can only barely be guessed at. Thorpe is wonderfully able to give the impression that he isn't expecting to find anything in particular during his excavations, a quality that gives his looking more vigor, and also more tolerance. He is a listening writer, reluctant to prescribe meaning, cautious about his conclusions. As might be expected, the more details about Ulverton he reveals the harder it becomes for him to hold onto any "concept" of the village. Gracious enough to allow his subject to retain its inscrutability, Thorpe never presumes that he has actually revisited the past—a rare humility for a novelist assuming the guise of historian. A twentieth-century character writes:

> Our village was more full of eccentrics then than now, but even the most awry of minds was inextricably woven into the common fabric, just as the trees in the wood grow more individual the more familiar one becomes with the mass. Matters have changed: our great roads are thronged with motor-cars and lorries, the wireless tinkles, the telephone connects us with far-away towns. Ulverton is slowly losing its sense of remoteness; each day brings the world nearer, darkening my room with its passing, pruning us of our odder growths, blowing away the strong rich scents that come of stagnation. The nearest high scarp is no longer the edge of the world, and heads barely turn when the toot of a motor-car sounds at Church Corner. Is this to be regretted? Time, dear reader, shall arbitrate upon that question—not I.

Thorpe's restraint is evident in the very structure of the novel. Not satisfied that his multiple narrators will broaden the focus enough, Thorpe gives many of his chapters the look of found documents—with all the effects of time untouched. Stories often begin and end in the middle of a sentence, as though these few pages were all that survived some unspoken calamity. The chapter from 1953 contains, among other things, only part of a transcript of a tape-recorded memoir: the first five-and-a-half minutes have been "lost due to magnetic tape snapping," another five seconds gone because of "electrical interference." Later in the same chapter, the narrator explains that her typewriter is failing her, and as we read on, the "o" starts dropping from her words—"riginal," "frm," "effrt"—each gulping sound a healthy reminder of the fragile hold any writer has on history.

At its most evocative, a vestigial testimony will point to a larger absence, making *Ulverton* ultimately a portrait of loss. By meditating on the lacunae in his imagined history rather than working to fill them in, Thorpe discovers painful hollows in his characters' lives. An exquisitely lyrical woman from 1743, for instance, leaves us erotic, beseeching letters to a secret lover; the fact, though, that none of his replies is here, if any were written, underscores all too vividly how doomed their love really was.

Throughout *Ulverton* questions are deliberately left unanswered and riddles unsolved—a murderer is never identified in one story; a woman's madness never explained in another. As unfinished business accumulates and even the simplest conversation falls into a void or occurs in airtight isolation, Ulverton begins to seem a deeply divided if not entirely fractured community. To an outsider, it looks

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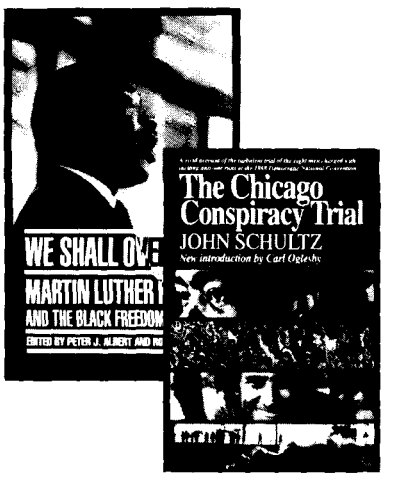

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Master and Man

'Punto bläst Magnifique'
(Mozart to his father, Paris, 5 April 1778)

1.
Giovanni Punto, born Jan Václav Stich
At Tetschen, now Zehušice, in 1746,
Belonged to Wenzel Joseph, Graf von Thun,
But ran away when he was twenty to have a life of his own.

2.
He was a hornplayer, the best in his day,
Best ever perhaps. Mozart wrote him K
297b, the *Sinfonia Concertante,* and Beethoven
The *Horn Sonata,* Opus 17.

3.
Count Wenzel Joseph though was furious
For he had put money where Jan's mouth was,
Sent him to masters, the best, in Prague, Munich and Dresden
And wanted a long return on his investment.

4.
Now he put money on Giovanni's head.
The ungrateful little swine is mine, he said,
What he produces is my property,
Every silver note. You bring him back to me

5.
Or knock his front teeth out. Of this poor man,
Perhaps not one of the best of the von Thun clan
But who for all I know was kind to animals,
Feared God and listening to music in his soul's

6.
Best part had once or twice been shown
Love, freedom, joy, nothing is known
Except his dates and in between the two
That thing he sent his bully-boys to do.

7.
Easy to imagine Giovanni Punto
On a cloud in heaven playing the silver *cor solo*
Made for him in Paris by Joseph Raoux, the best,
And poor Graf Wenzel Joseph in distress

8.
Sending to Father Abraham for one note
Of the waters of that horn to cool his throat,
Tongue, lips, and being told there is
Between a soul in torment and a soul in bliss

9.
A great gulf fixed. I hope instead
He served his time in purgatory before he was dead—
At nights, dreaming it done, the worst, dreaming it carried out
And woke, and wept for gratitude that it was not.

10.
Wenzel was dead. Jan Václav Stich went home
King, through a multitude. His turn come,
He had himself sent off with Mozart's *Requiem,*
Mercy enough in it for both of them.

DAVID CONSTANTINE

quaint and bound by shared purpose, but in reality it is always on the verge of flying apart. The disappearance of old traditions, which is often the most lamented change in history-minded stories, is here only the symptom of a far-reaching spiritual erosion.

Despite Thorpe's tone of bemused equanimity, these social and cultural losses deeply trouble his characters; and at times *Ulverton* has the febrile energy of people who feel certain that everything glamorous and newsworthy has passed them by. Many of them tell their stories with a mix of defiance and hopefulness—defying the indifference they half-expect to encounter, hopeful that their good humor, sincerity or at least their vulnerability will nonetheless win over one or two listeners.

They compel attention so effectively because it's apparent that as they talk about banalities of farming life and seasonal pastimes they are really trying to find a seemly way to speak of death—a topic whose grandeur would embarrass them if it wasn't disguised with metaphor. A farmer embeds his anxiety with his own mortality and the need to "seed an heir" in his steady-toned harvest log. By writing carefully about an amateur excavation in 1914 of one of Ulverton's mysterious hills and the ancient bones discovered there, an aging civil servant named Fergusson figures out how to talk about the way World War I devastated the village during those same months. Sometimes the feelings of loss are fleeting and their strains muted, but still the novel trembles.

In the end, Thorpe implicitly wonders if all acts of retrieving the past demand a ferocious willfulness that, if not monitored, can destroy the very goal one seeks. Perhaps no activity embodies this tension more poignantly than photography—and in fact photographs become troubling talismans in the later years of this chronicle, just the way rusty daggers and rickety wagon wheels did in earlier sections. A chapter called "Shutter," set in 1859, collects the explanatory texts that accompanied photographs by an anonymous woman. (Most of the photos themselves are lost.) The volunteers in 1914 pose for a triumphal group portrait that ends up actually commemorating defeat and death. And, in 1988, a former resident of Ulverton returns to star in a documentary about the town; in the post-production script printed here, Ulverton aspires to be symbolic of English life and English troubles.

Thorpe's ambivalence about the power of photography doesn't lift during these last chapters, and *Ulverton* is richer for it. On the one hand, the nineteenth-

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century photographer is eloquent about the unjudgmental, exact nature of photographs—the very qualities that Thorpe strives to emulate in his prose. This side of the novelist can't fully deny the appeal of rescuing with a camera a portion of life from oblivion. Moreover, he enjoys how photographs seem to offer easy access to lost time; a mere lingering gaze at an image draws you back, even makes you feel that you possess this aspect of the past—not an unseductive illusion.

Yet it is just this illusion that the other Adam Thorpe tries to dispel. The way photographs freeze an event from the past threatens forever to hold that experience apart from us—making it less knowable, not more. In "Shutter," it is the photographer's *writing* that evokes the actual energy of the person or place photographed; it amplifies on all the things left out of the frame. Most important, it suggests the attitude and relationship of the photographer toward what she sees, thus checking any impulse to view these images as fact. The words, of course, are never able to pin something down as swiftly as images can—and that's precisely why they are so appealing: they encourage readers to imagine what has failed to be represented, and so to engage with the past instead of merely beholding it.

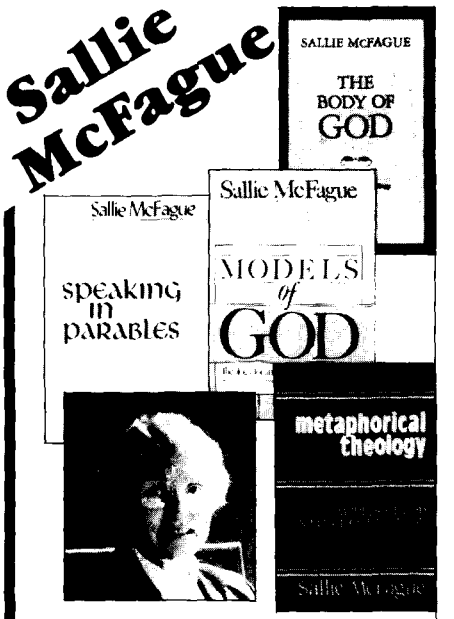
Frozen images disturb Thorpe for more than aesthetic reasons. He also worries about how easily they can be manipulated, and how powerfully they can affect thought. To distract from the hard truths of the village, the documentary opens with panoramic shots of the countryside, romantic montage and close-ups of misty-eyed villagers gazing out over the landscape to the accompaniment of Vivaldi. In the same script, we learn that a developer refurbishing an Ulverton pub plans to use the 1914 photograph as one of many "touches" he hopes will summon up an authentic English atmosphere. Forgotten, of course, are all the gruesome associations with the photo. Gone, too, any chance to reflect on the unthinking patriotism behind the very taking of the picture, or on the shortsighted, hapless nature of the grinning young men hoping to be a part of history. History now is mere decor, as the old becomes the olde.

"Another year. There's always that. Another year." The developer's motto, clichéd on first hearing, actually contains an antidote to his own trivializing impulses. This is a novel more concerned with time passing than with time past; and the wisest of its characters find opportunity in that transience. For Thorpe defines time as much as a salve as a scourge. While he certainly doesn't ignore the evidence of decay, he can see how the same force of time ensures his beloved landscape's future—promising to undo orthodoxies, dispel animosities, close wounds. Thinking again like a farmer, he sees cycles rather than straight lines of time; next year's harvest beneath this year's frost; life, however tentative, in the symbols of death. "Here," says Fergusson, one "must see old things put to new and unlikely uses"—the glass-plate negatives, for instance, that belonged to the woman photographer are used two generations later to make miniature greenhouses in a cabbage garden.

Miss Violet Nightingale, the narrator from 1953, is Thorpe's most beguiling creation because she, too, believes in such reincarnation. From one angle, her diary tells of a dreary life—work as secretary to a bombastic cartoonist writing his memoirs, afternoons spent eating spam, spam fritters, dumplings, meat-paste, spam again. But her tone of voice tells a different story: it's a blend of the droll and the mischievous, the impertinent and the principled. When she burns her employer's memoir (piqued at being left out of its heroic tale), she demands a more capacious kind of history, one that, perhaps, isn't written down with such airs of finality. In her gesture, she insists that those who take it upon themselves to remember so publicly bear in mind the tentativeness of their record and acknowledge that they are making mere versions of experience, not dogma. Thorpe included: he reminds us of his own subjectivity by including a character identified as "Adam Thorpe, local author and performer" in the film script; this Thorpe is doing a series of articles about Ulverton's legends.

A version suggests others still to come and all the possible versions rejected. Violet's own writing does the same, for Thorpe has preserved her second-thoughts and revisions: a typical passage transcribed from a recording reads: "I really ought ... Mr. Bradman is not a la ... Although ... I ought to say at this point that our professional relationship, while clo intimate, has never impinged on our private domains." In the arrested words and tangled syntax Thorpe best dramatizes our truest relationship to experience—a constant struggle, nagging doubt about understanding. Thorpe is able to make crystalline music out of the English language, but it is the silences and gasps and lurching missteps in his prose that make *Ulverton* such a searching and always tactful novel.

MARC ROBINSON teaches dramatic literature at Amherst College.



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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Toy goy

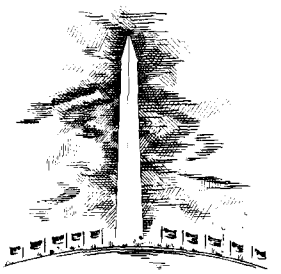
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THE more esoteric passages of the kabala mention the talismanic importance of blond-headed gentiles, but I would not be surprised if they did. The flaming gentile in the Jewish institution often enjoys a status not so different from a luxury good: the Toy Goy. The toy goy has many privileges: he is permitted to slough off before and after (but never during) Jewish holidays; to laugh at Jewish jokes around the office; to be as superficial, happy and untroubled as he pleases. His responsibilities normally are slight: to point to the bright side of things; to lend credence to assorted pro-Israel views discounted when voiced by Jews; to persuade Jewish colleagues that their terminal bad luck is actually good luck; above all, to be lucky himself.

THERE IS A CATCH, HOWEVER. THE catch is the Jewish holiday. Predictably enough, the offices of THE NEW REPUBLIC have emptied for Passover. All around are chairs vacated by Jews who chose to celebrate one of the great escapes of all time by escaping, leaving their house gentiles to pick up the slack. It's O.K. Really. I don't mind.

MY LIFE HAS BEEN PUNCTUATED BY vanishing Jews. Some combination of accident and design has conspired to semitize my experience; since early boyhood I have passed seamlessly from one Jewish institution to the next—a Jewish school, the New York art dealer Wildenstein, the New York investment bank Salomon Brothers, THE NEW REPUBLIC. Most years I commemorate the flight of the Jews through the Sinai to the Promised Land by witnessing a far more hectic flight of the Jews through the traffic jam to the airport, then looking around to see what they have neglected to finish. Each of these annual occasions revives my sympathies for the much maligned Pharaoh. I too find the prospect intensely irritating that the Jews may have up and left for good.

JUST BEFORE THE PASSOVER EXODUS I returned to New Orleans to address the Cum Laude Society of the Isidore Newman School. The school, in which I was incarcerated from the age of 5 to the age of 17, was the first of the many Jewish institutions through which I have passed. It was opened at the turn of the century as a manual training center for Jewish orphans. From 1965 to 1978 more than half my classmates were Jewish, the school calendar was determined by Jewish holidays and rituals, and the school's sports opponents, when in need of a handy insult, called us, weirdly, Jewmen. Some of my earliest memories are of playing dreidels, singing Jewish folk songs and defending myself against anti-Semitism.

IT'S A TRICKY BUSINESS RETURNING to your old school, even in the guise of the Toy Goy. This was immediately clear from the manner in which I was introduced to the assembled students. For all the truth-seeking noises they make, schools are only secondarily interested in simple truth. Or, rather, they are interested in truth to the extent that it overlaps with their principal goal of survival. And the survival techniques of the ordinary school are essentially fascistic. Alumni are dragged back in the same spirit that huge bronze memorials were erected in the Soviet Union: as a tribute to the wisdom of the institution. *We created this.* Since they have an insatiable demand for alumni heroes, and since heroes are rare, schools must eventually bend the truth to fill the gap. The deal you cut when you return to your old school, to be put on exhibit as an Example to Youth, ends up looking something like this: the school agrees to forget what you were actually like as a student, if you offer an implicit endorsement of the school. Show up to school and behave yourself for one day as an adult and all charges accumulated over thirteen years of childhood will be dropped. Not bad.



IN THE OLD AUDITORIUM I SAT ON the stage beside the Cum Laude Society—to which I never belonged, never even came close to belonging—and smiled at the sound of my past being reinvented for the occasion. Scholar. Athlete. Wit. On one track of my mind I revelled in descriptions of my school performance entirely unrecognizable to anyone who had actually attempted to teach me. Oh, yes, that's me! But on a second track I was experiencing what the late New Orleans novelist Walker Percy, leaning on Kierkegaard, called a repetition. "A repetition," Percy explained in *The Moviegoer,* "is the re-enactment of past experience toward the end of isolating the time segment which has lapsed in order that it, the lapsed time, can be savored of itself and without the usual adulteration of events that clog time like peanuts in brittle."

A FUNNY THING HAPPENS WHEN you sit quietly savoring pure, lapsed, peanut-brittle time. You begin to regress. You begin to feel less and less like an Example to Youth and more and more like whatever you were when you were last on the same spot. The last time I had performed on the stage of the Isidore Newman School was when I was cast in the role of the Jolly Old Snowman in a third-grade play of the same name. Out of my mind went my lecture; into my mind popped the horrific words of the song I sang for the last time twenty-four years ago:

> I'm a jolly old snowman
> As you can plainly see
> And I come from the
> North
> Where it's cold as cold can
> be

A LIGHT SWEAT BROKE out on my forehead at the thought that I might actually rise on the memory spot a few feet downstage from where I sat and belt it out again. Then, suddenly, the specter vanished, to be replaced by an even more horrifying montage: slow-motion replays of the several times I nearly succeeded in getting myself tossed out of the Isidore Newman School. There was the book report of *Johnny Tremain,* pathetically plagiarized word for word from a long blurb on the back of the dust jacket. There was the English teacher to whom, in the wake of her scathing and accurate evaluation of my person, I had actually said, "Are you always so pleasant to deal with or is this just an especially good day for you?"

THEN THERE WAS THE PERHAPS first ever attempt to read a pornographic subtext into that singular portrait of childhood innocence, *To Kill a Mockingbird.* You may recall that one of its characters is a boy named Dill, who, possibly to emphasize his rootlessness, was given no last name. Possessed by some demon, I raised my eighth-grade hand and announced my discovery that Dill's father was named Robert Doe. The teacher stood frozen in place as I prodded him with the obvious follow-up questions: "So what does that make Dill's name now?" "Those of us who taught Michael remember his wit," the faculty leader of the Cum Laude Society was saying with real conviction as he finished his introduction. It was only toy goyish good luck that he'd never taught me.

MICHAEL LEWIS

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

"A Dream Deferred"

I have been and still am an ardent integrationist. That's why I'm so concerned about the desegregation suit in Hartford, Connecticut. The plaintiffs, a group of minority youngsters, accuse the state of Connecticut of denying them an equal opportunity for education because the Hartford schools are segregated.

There's no disputing that the Hartford schools, which are 90 percent African-American and Hispanic, are segregated. It's also true that children going to these schools are getting a much worse education than youngsters in the predominately white schools in neighboring districts. And it's no wonder that the Hartford youngsters and their parents have gotten angry and impatient waiting for the fulfillment, as they say, of "a dream deferred."

Unfortunately, the remedies being suggested have been tried already—and people had great hopes for them—but they have not delivered. This time, I fear, not only will they fail to get us more integration and improved schools; they may succeed in destroying public education altogether and substituting a private school system segregated by race, class and religion.

One of the proposed remedies is to create one large school district out of Hartford and the surrounding suburbs and bus kids to integrate the schools. Another is to reorganize the state's 166 school districts into six mega-districts and to encourage voluntary integration within these districts.

In theory, one or the other of these plans could work. But in practice such plans have seldom been successful in integrating the schools. And when they have succeeded, they still have not raised the achievement level of poor minority youngsters—which was the goal of integration in the first place. Maybe for once we should take the direct approach and concentrate on improving the schools.

What people want, first and foremost, whether they are white or African-American or Hispanic, are quality neighborhood public schools.

What people want, first and foremost, whether they are white or African-American or Hispanic, are quality neighborhood public schools. The only reason parents consider sending children elsewhere is to get something far better than they can get locally. New York City's District 4 schools, which are located in Spanish Harlem, are a case in point. They show, first of all, that poor neighborhoods can have high-achieving public schools. And they show that when such schools exist, parents from all over will try to send their children there—will even take them out of private school to do so. In District 4, integration is a by-product of excellence rather than the other way around, and it can be in other places, too.

This is not an easy option to pursue. Lifting up poor schools requires people with creative ideas and the energy, determination and money to carry them out. The community has to give consistent support to the effort and so must the local and state governments. But this plan will work, and the other remedies under consideration, even though they are well-intentioned, have not worked before and are unlikely to do so now. What they are likely to do is create a lot of political conflict that will divert everybody's attention from educational issues.

A recent poll asked Hartford citizens how they would respond if their child was forced to change schools: 51 percent of whites said they would move or take the child out of public schools. So did 45 percent of Hispanics and 23 percent of African-Americans. We have no idea whether people would follow through on this. Nevertheless, the figures suggest that large numbers would oppose either legislation creating mega-districts or court-ordered busing, and this opposition could lead to the kind of political conflict we've seen over the years in other cities where desegregation plans were enacted. It could also lead to something much worse.

When New York City Schools Chancellor Joseph Fernandez proposed his Rainbow Curriculum, the aim was to encourage children to be tolerant. But many people objected strongly to the idea of teaching first-graders about gays and lesbians in order to be tolerant of them, and they rose to defeat Fernandez and his curriculum. Now, members of right-wing groups are entering school board politics and may well be elected. Fernandez wanted to strike a blow for tolerance, but the result is likely to be a victory for intolerance.

Similarly, in Connecticut, legislation or a court order in favor of desegregation might lead people who oppose desegregation plans to insist on "choice" for parents and on passing a voucher bill that would allow parents to use public money to send their kids to private schools. This would do nothing to improve public schools, and the private education system that was created would be more rigidly segregated than anything we have now.

There's no question that the aims of the Hartford suit are desirable, but given the experience we've had over the past 20 years, are they likely to succeed or to further the very evils they are trying to overcome?

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1993 by Albert Shanker.

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